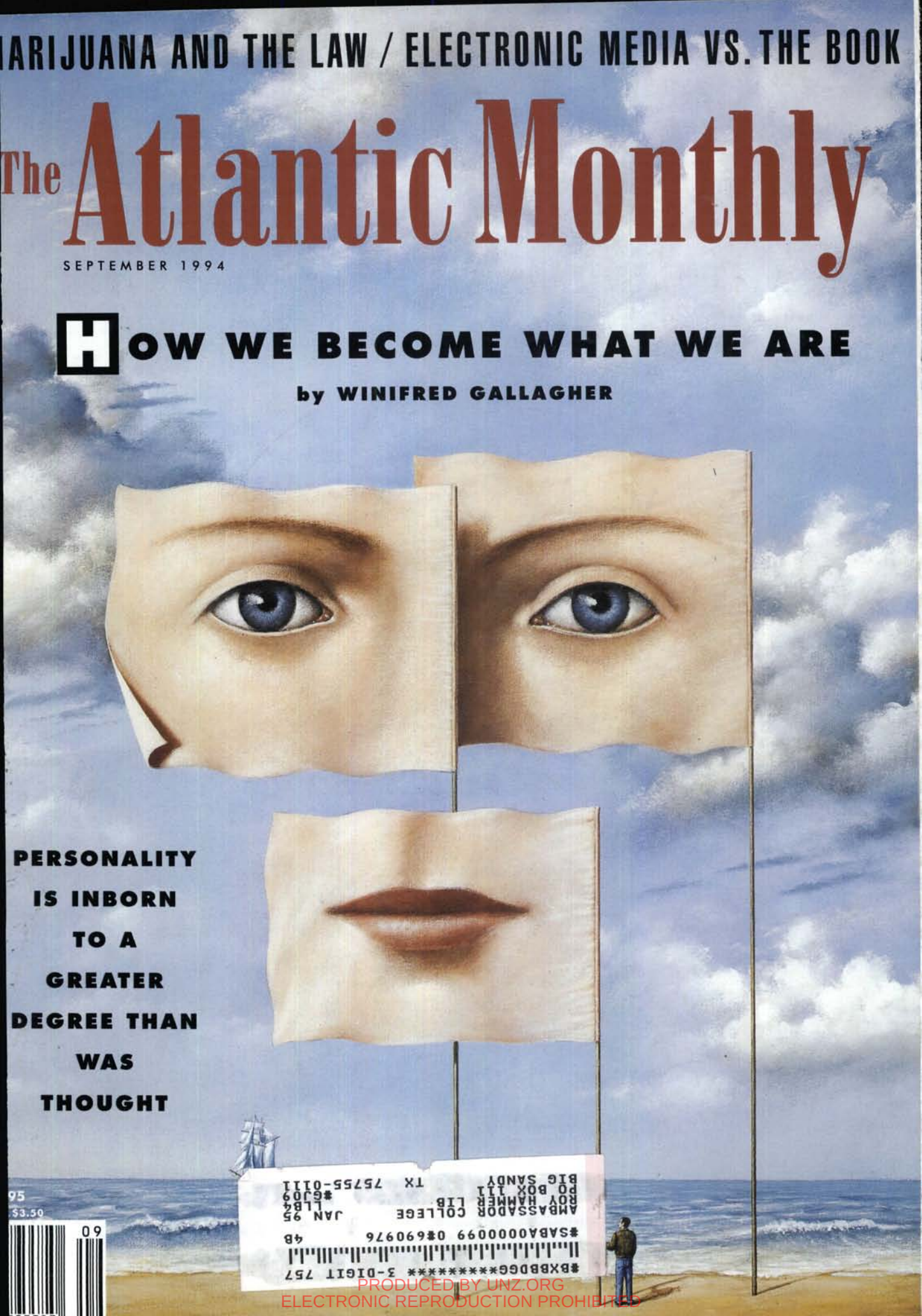
MARIJUANA AND THE LAW / ELECTRONIC MEDIA VS. THE BOOK

# The Atlantic Monthly

SEPTEMBER 1994

## HOW WE BECOME WHAT WE ARE

by WINIFRED GALLAGHER



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SEPTEMBER 1994

# The Atlantic Monthly

FOUNDED IN
1857

Page 38

Page 84

Page 56

## REPORTS

**18 Notes & Comment: Where the Boys Are**
Much of American pop culture, the author suggests, derives from the high school locker room.
*by* **Steven Stark**

**22 Foreign Affairs: An African Success Story?**
It is a measure of Africa's depressing circumstances that Uganda, though still troubled, can today be held up as an example of a relatively functional society.
*by* **Bill Berkeley**

## HUMOR, FICTION, & POETRY

**56 Three French Poems**
*An anthology*
*by* **W. S. Merwin**

**64 Mayakovsky in New York**
*A poem*
*by* **Annie Dillard**

**72 Leaving Home**
*A short story*
*by* **Roxana Robinson**

**78 Shepherd's Purse**
*A poem*
*by* **John Haines**

**95 House for Sale**
*A drawing*
*by* **Tamar Haber-Schaim**

**38 How We Become What We Are**
Interest in the biological dimensions of personality was for decades overshadowed by research into the formative influences of environment. Over the past decade, however, modern genetics has refocused attention on the power of biology—and on the many ways in which that power makes itself felt.
*by* **Winifred Gallagher**

**61 The End of the Book?**
One hears a lot of talk about how electronic media will make words on paper obsolete. There are good reasons to argue that this won't happen. There are better ones to argue that it shouldn't.
*by* **D. T. Max**

**84 Marijuana and the Law**
Nowhere are the perverse consequences of mandatory-minimum sentencing more apparent than in the enforcement of marijuana laws. Minor offenders now crowd federal and state prisons, at a time when many of those convicted of violent crimes are quickly returned to the streets.
*by* **Eric Schlosser**

## ARTS & LEISURE

**32 Travel: Net Gains**
Relaxation does not need to be the only goal of a vacation—there is also self-improvement. Our correspondent reports on stays at two tennis camps.
*by* **James Fallows**

**100 Food: The Noble Vinegar**
There are varieties of balsamic vinegar not dreamt of in American gastronomy—varieties that approach the status of a fine liqueur.
*by* **Corby Kummer**

## BOOKS

**105 The Great American Studies Novel**
*Raintree County*, by Ross Lockridge Jr.
*Shade of the Raintree*, by Larry Lockridge
*by* **Charles Trueheart**

**111 Brief Reviews**
*by* **Phoebe-Lou Adams**

## OTHER DEPARTMENTS

**2 745 Boylston Street/ Contributors**

**6 Letters**

**16 The September Almanac**

**83 First Encounters**
Noël Coward and Laurence Olivier
*by* **Edward Sorel**

**115 The Puzzler**
*by* **Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon**

**116 Word Histories**
*by* **Craig M. Carver**

*Cover art by Rafal Olbinski*

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# 745 BOYLSTON STREET

IN this issue we publish a small anthology, "Three French Poems," by the distinguished poet and inveterate wanderer W. S. Merwin. Merwin has owned a stone house in Quercy for four decades, and the house and its surroundings have provided the setting for much of his writing, including the poems in this issue. And yet Merwin came into maturity as a poet not overseas but during a remarkable few years spent in Boston beginning in 1956. As he recalled recently, "Robert Graves had said that you had to find your own poetry, but you had to go somewhere completely different before you did it; and he thought that Americans went back to America."

Those words of Merwin's come from an interview with Peter Davison, *The Atlantic*'s poetry editor, in Davison's new book, *The Fading Smile*, a chronicle of the poetic renaissance centered in Boston during the late 1950s. Besides Merwin, the poets discussed include Richard Wilbur, Maxine Kumin, Donald Hall, Philip Booth, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, L. E. Sissman, Stanley Kunitz, and Robert Lowell. "Some of them," Davison writes, "have been my teachers and masters, some have been friends and more than friends. But all of them, alive or dead, were my companions on a voyage, one of the most exciting poetic 'surges,' to use Philip Booth's word, ever to take place in America."

*Merwin in the 1960s; Davison in 1955*

Davison interprets the work produced during this time with the supple confidence of an intimate. Vignettes abound, by turns evocative and haunting: of an aging Robert Frost in his Cambridge living room, "the fragrance of it, a little like dusty patchouli"; of Robert Lowell, on the verge of one of his breakdowns, cowering before his hushed students in a corner of a classroom window. But perhaps the most affecting passages of all describe Davison's own evolution into someone "no longer timorous about bringing poetry into a truthful embrace with the most powerful emotions I could feel."

One is conscious of *The Fading Smile* as a book whose silent but essential co-author is the passage of time. As W. S. Merwin writes in this issue: "It was only as the afternoon lengthened on its / dial and the shadows reached out farther and farther / from everything that we began to listen for what / might be escaping us. . . ." —THE EDITORS

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Bill Berkeley** ("An African Success Story?") is a journalist reporting from Africa on an Alicia Patterson fellowship. He has previously reported for *The Atlantic Monthly* from Liberia, Zaire, and South Africa.

**Annie Dillard** ("Mayakovsky in New York") is the author of many books, including *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction. Her latest book, *The Annie Dillard Reader*, will be published next fall.

**Winifred Gallagher** ("How We Become What We Are") is the author of *The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions, and Actions* (1993). She is at work on a book about temperament and personality.

**Tamar Haber-Schaim** ("House for Sale") is an illustrator whose work has appeared in a variety of publications, including *British Vogue*, and at the Frankfurt Book Fair and other international exhibitions.

**John Haines** ("Shepherd's Purse") is the author of *The Stars, the Snow, the Fire* (1989) and *New Poems 1980–88* (1990), which received the Lenore Marshall/*Nation* prize for poetry.

**D. T. Max** ("The End of the Book?") is the book editor of *The New York Observer* and a journalist specializing in the media. His articles have appeared in numerous national publications.

**W. S. Merwin** ("Three French Poems") won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1971 for his book *The Carrier of Ladders*. His many other books of poems include *The Rain in the Trees* (1988), *Selected Poems* (1988), and *Travels* (1993).

**Rafal Olbinski** (cover art) is a painter, an illustrator, and an instructor at the School of Visual Arts in New York. His work has won numerous awards, including gold medals from the Society of Illustrators and the Art Directors Club of New York.

**Roxana Robinson** ("Leaving Home") received a National Endowment for the Arts writing fellowship in 1987. Her books include *Summer Light* (1988), *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life* (1989), and *A Glimpse of Scarlet and Other Stories* (1991). Her work is included in *Best American Short Stories of 1994*.

**Eric Schlosser** ("Marijuana and the Law") is a novelist and playwright who lives in New York City. His contribution to this issue is the second part of a two-part article.

**Edward Sorel** (First Encounters) lives in Manhattan and is a cartoonist and caricaturist. A collection of First Encounters columns, by Sorel and his wife, Nancy Caldwell Sorel, will be published next month.

**Steven Stark** ("Where the Boys Are") writes frequently about political and popular culture. Stark is a commentator on National Public Radio and on Cable News Network. He is writing a book about the most influential programs in the history of television.

**Charles Trueheart** ("The Great American Studies Novel"), a foreign correspondent based in Toronto for *The Washington Post*, has written about books and other cultural subjects for twenty years.


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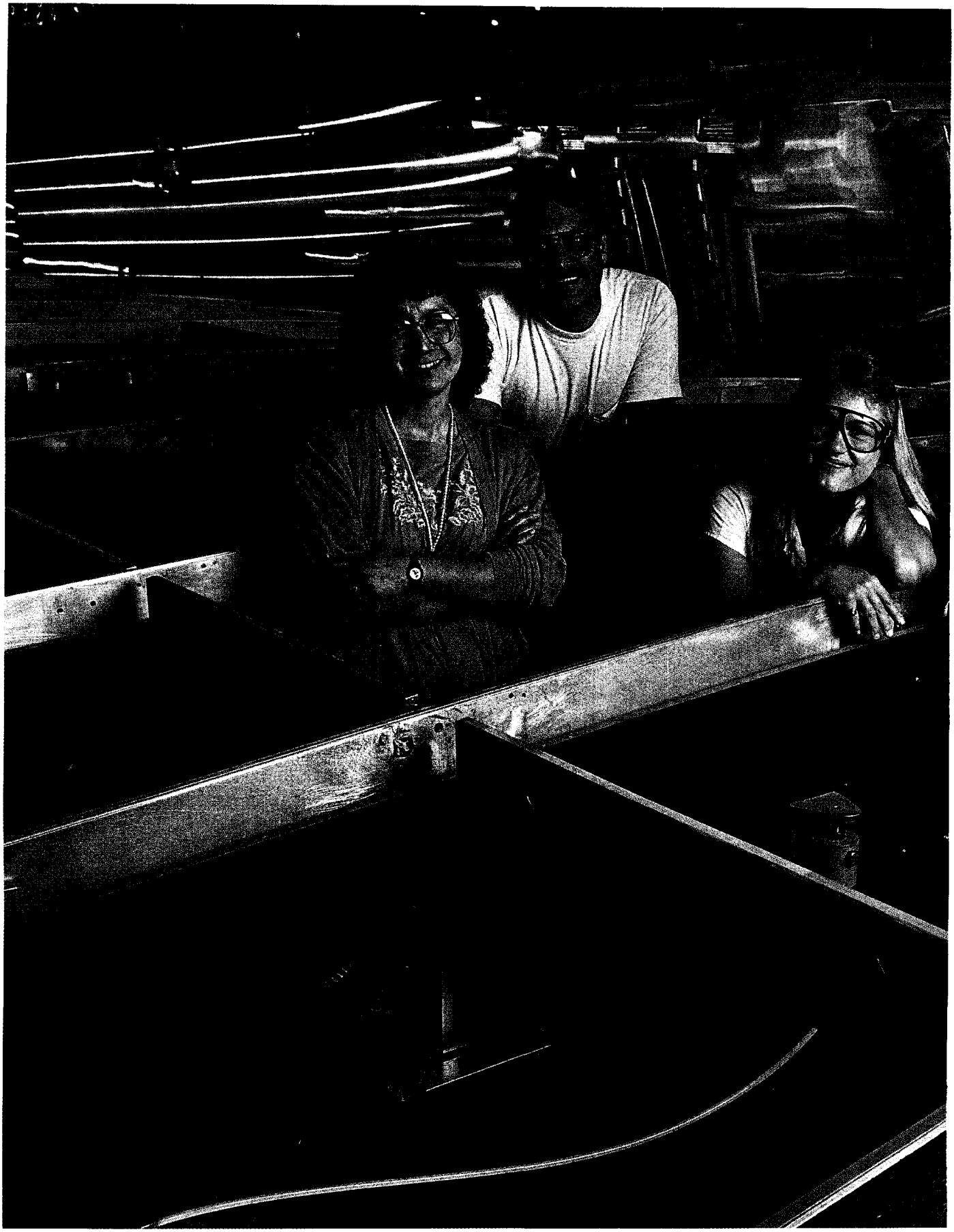

From left: Karen Berto, Joey Riley, Tina Olson, Spencer Graham

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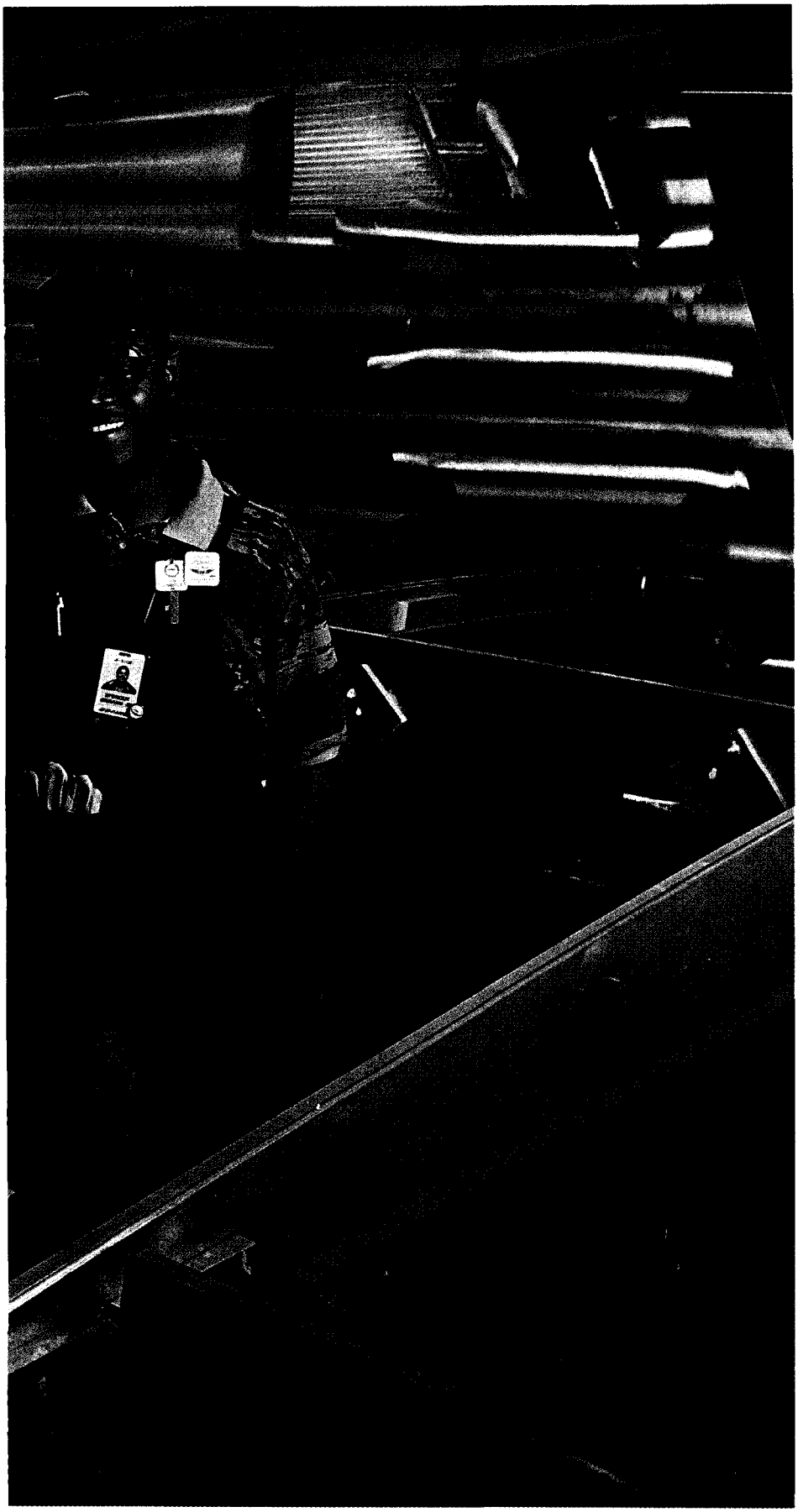

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# LETTERS

## Crime Bill

Wendy Kaminer's article "Federal Offense" (June *Atlantic*) illustrates the frustration and even rage that many older people feel when they contemplate the so-called criminal-justice systems that have evolved in this country over the past thirty years or so. As one who grew up during the 1930s, I miss keenly that "consistent, nuanced notion of moral agency, an ethic of relative accountability," to which Kaminer refers. Most young people in my day learned early to distinguish right from wrong and were called swiftly to account when they chose to behave wrongly. We were not perfect, of course, and probably got away with more than many of us would care to admit. Nevertheless, we knew that if we were caught, whatever defense we might mount could not include ignorance ("Gee, I didn't know I couldn't do that") or outside influence ("The devil—or abuse or alcohol or drugs or a friend—made me do it"). The fact that both of these seem to be acceptable defenses today offends my sense of justice and aggravates the frustrations I feel.

**Richard H. Hill**
*Eugene, Oreg.*

"Federal Offense" is a call mainly for more government programs to attack the root causes of crime, rather than to punish criminals after crimes have been committed. Wendy Kaminer is probably correct in her statements that most lawmakers who vote for mandatory-sentencing proposals and for building additional prisons are driven more by a desire for re-election than by a belief that such measures will be particularly effective in reducing crime. She bemoans the fact that hope is out of fashion and that there is little faith in the curative power of good government; but she does not address the critical question of why this is so. Why do lawmakers and the public have little faith in the ability of government programs to attack the root causes of crime? Why do such programs now have much less credibility than they did in the 1960s? Why is it that even many liberals who in the past supported almost any government program to address almost any problem now have little faith in the ability of the government to accomplish much by spending more money on programs?

The simple answer to the question of why there is so little confidence in government social programs is that so many of them have so little to show for the huge amounts of money that have been squandered on them. The failure of the War on Poverty is not due to the stinginess of the American taxpayer. Since the mid-1960s taxpayers have contributed literally trillions of dollars to anti-poverty programs of one sort or another, but the official poverty rate is now not much lower than it was at the beginning of this period. The crime rate has actually gone up dramatically during this period.

This simple answer, though, is not the whole story. The more important question is, Why have so many government social programs failed so badly? Were the programs poorly conceived or poorly focused, or were the main problems in the implementation? Were the people who set up the programs out of touch with reality? Did the backers of the programs deliberately oversell them? Were the program managers more interested in expanding their bureaucratic empires than they were in addressing the problems that the programs were supposed to address? Are many of the civil-service employees who actually carry out the programs unlikely to perform well in jobs that require great dedication, wisdom, competence, or patience? Are different programs working at cross purposes? Is anyone (proponents, managers, or workers) held accountable for the successes or failures of these programs?

Until the questions about why current programs are not more successful have



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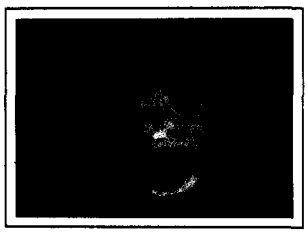
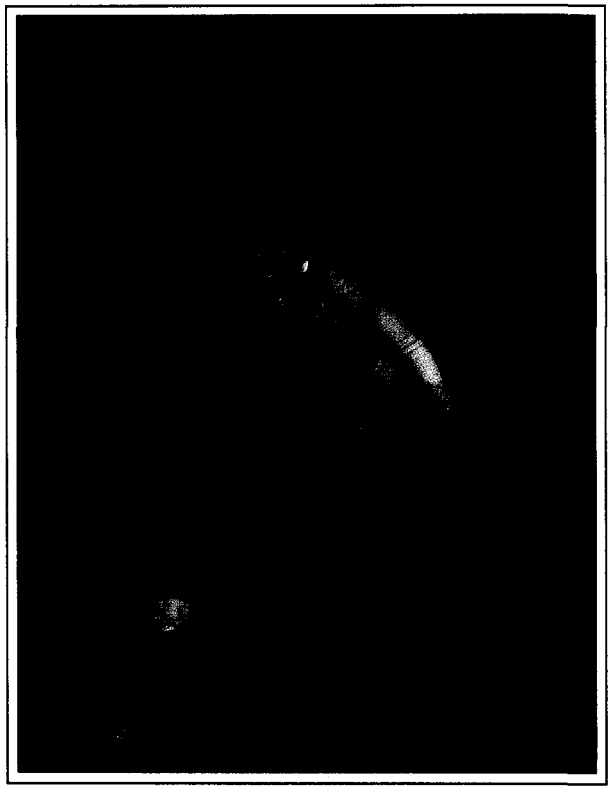


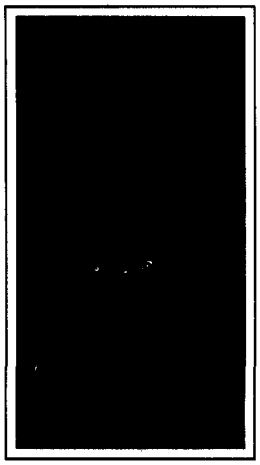
*Yellow Coney photographed at Three Fathom Wall, Little Cayman.*

The environment is hostile, the lighting difficult, and the subjects elusive.

Yet it is a world in which Stephen Frink has excelled. A vast knowledge of the habits and habitats of his subjects has enabled him to become one of the world's most published underwater photographers. His remarkable pictures, ranging from angelfish to sharks, regularly appear in major publications. Plus he is the author of countless articles on diving.



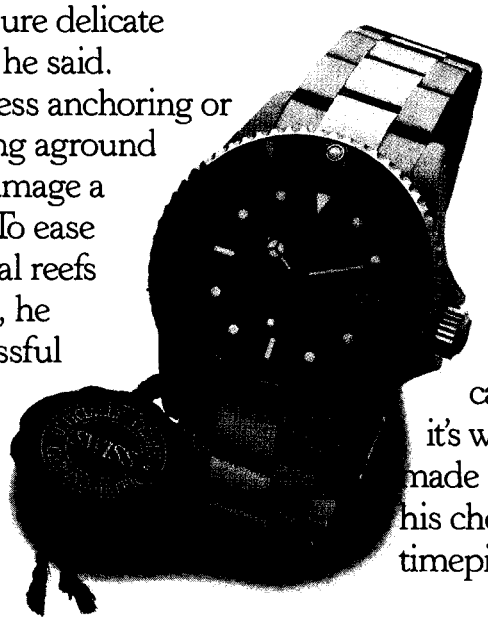
*The spectacular coral walls of Fiji as photographed by Frink.*



*Stephen Frink photographing Clownfish in the Red Sea.*

Frink's career has also given him a special appreciation for the fragility of underwater ecosystems. "The slightest diver contact can injure delicate coral," he said. "Careless anchoring or running aground can damage a reef." To ease diving pressure on the coral reefs near his Florida Keys base, he recently organized a successful project that sank two decommissioned Coast Guard cutters off the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary. These ships offer divers a much needed and fascinating alternative to the natural reefs.

## "Some of the most vivid images on earth are under water." *Stephen Frink*



Stephen Frink's life and livelihood depend on the flawless performance of his equipment. It must be pressure proof, durable, and resistant to the corrosive effects of salt water. It's why he takes such care in selecting his camera and scuba gear, and it's why he has long made a Rolex Oyster his choice of timepiece.

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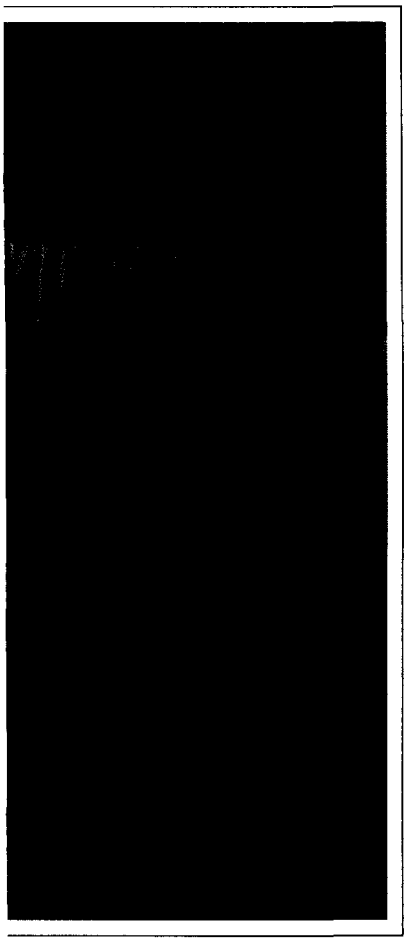

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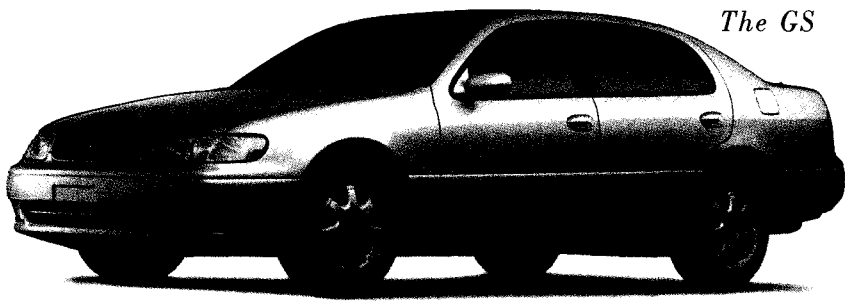

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been seriously addressed and answered, persuading either lawmakers or the public that new social programs are worthwhile is going to be a hard sell.

**Floyd Dunn**
*Downers Grove, Ill.*

*Wendy Kaminer replies:*

I don't remember calling for new social programs to address the "root causes" of crime. Nor did I "bemoan" our loss of hope; I simply mentioned it, because hopefulness, or the lack of it, plays such an important role in shaping expectations of criminal justice. Obviously, the less hopeful people feel about their own futures, the nation's future, and the human capacity for self-improvement, the more punitive they are likely to feel toward criminal offenders.

Floyd Dunn's characterization of my article as an argument for focusing on social services instead of punishment is worth noting, however, because it exemplifies the reflexive polarization of criminal-justice debates into "liberal" calls to attack the root causes of crime with social programs and "conservative" calls to attack criminals with longer sentences and shorter, more summary trials and appeals. In fact informed people, liberal and conservative, are apt to acknowledge what should be common sense: that we need to engage in both crime prevention and punishment.

Effective crime prevention may entail economic-revitalization programs or social programs like safe, functioning public schools with after-hours recreational facilities. Effective punishment may entail increasing the sureness rather than the severity of sentences. Long sentences (which are already mandated for serious crimes) are not likely to deter offenders who don't expect to get arrested. And if we want to punish and incapacitate violent offenders with long prison sentences (as we should), we need to provide alternative sentences for nonviolent offenders (particularly nonviolent drug offenders), who occupy so many prison cells.

My article wasn't calling for social programs, or any other particular approach to crime; it was calling for less demagoguery and more rationalism in formulating criminal-justice policy. It's true that I focused on the shortcomings of traditional "tough" law-enforcement strategies instead of traditional social programs, but I was, after all, deconstructing the federal crime bill, not proposals to reform welfare. Mr. Dunn explains that people have lost faith in traditional social programs because they haven't worked. An interesting question is why people haven't lost faith in traditional "tough on crime" programs—they haven't worked either.

## Clipper Chip

In James Fallows's article "Open Secrets" (June *Atlantic*), the Clipper chip and the digital-telephony bill are discussed with admirable clarity. The presentation of public-key cryptography is the best I have seen for a lay audience. However, a reader might derive some incorrect assumptions from the article unless several additional facts are pointed out.

Government use of the Clipper chip is approved by the National Security Agency for the transmission of nonsecret information. The article gives the impression that Clipper is so strong that military and intelligence services would use it, but this is not so. Hence concern is warranted about Clipper's actual degree of security and about possible secret back doors.

The 50,000 people who supported an Internet petition against Clipper were concerned about the classified nature of the algorithm. "Open Secrets" brushes this aside as an apparent distrust of bureaucracy. In actuality cryptographers have always maintained that no cryptosystem can be trusted unless it is openly developed and tested. This view is based on mathematical and programmatic aspects of cryptography which are ubiquitous in mathematical proofs and software testing. In the absence of such open development, the only thing citizens can do is trust the NSA, an organization that is not directly accountable to citizens. However, the NSA has considerable incentives to support cryptosystems that are breakable only by itself without using the escrow keys. A back door is difficult to recognize even in a nonsecret algorithm, but in a secret algorithm it is essentially impossible to determine.

The FBI has never released statistics about how it is thwarted by encryption technology or by digital telephony. How can a citizen judge the need for Clipper



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◆ RECENTLY ON THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY ONLINE:

Live conferences with Eric Schlosser, the author of August's "Reefer Madness" and this month's "Marijuana and the Law," and with James Fallows, *The Atlantic*'s Washington editor, and Esther Dyson, a leading computer-industry authority, about the future and culture of the Internet.

and the digital-telephony bill without such information?

**Paul E. Baclace**
*Menlo Park, Calif.*

James Fallows fails to mention an important aspect of the Clipper-chip plan which poses a threat apart from the oft-cited privacy issues.

The Clinton Administration has already indicated that it will not permit the export of any equipment using encryption technology other than the government-approved Clipper chip. As Fallows indicated in his article, no foreign customer is willing to buy equipment that is not secure from the U.S. government. Thus U.S. manufacturers have no options for entering the international market for secure communications equipment; the Clinton Administration is handing this market over to the U.S. industry's international competitors. Absent this artificial barrier, the U.S. communications-equipment industry could be expected to capture a large share of the international market. But even to fulfill the needs of the domestic market, the industry must bear the engineering and manufacturing burden of producing two models of each product: one with the Clipper chip, for the government, a market too large to ignore; and the other with a secure encryption algorithm, for the nongovernmental domestic market.

Aside from this omission, Fallows covers the Clipper-chip issue well, but his conclusion is puzzling. He correctly points out the paradoxical voluntary nature of the plan, which renders it constitutional but ineffective, so that even minimally intelligent targets of government eavesdropping can simply use communications equipment with some other encryption algorithm. He also correctly notes that the back-door decryption method available to the U.S. government will inevitably be compromised by a corrupt official, and that the Skipjack algorithm will not be made public, so we have only the assurance of an NSA bureaucrat that it is mathematically correct. This assurance will not convince any serious potential buyer of secure communications equipment, who will simply take his or her business elsewhere.

But, having pointed out these objections to the Clipper plan, Fallows fails to conclude that it should be scrapped, writing only that the danger it poses is less serious than the overwrought Internet predictions of a civil-libertarian nightmare. Fallows seems to accept the Clipper plan as if it were some sort of inevitable natural disaster to which we should resign ourselves, rather than a flawed policy implemented by an Administration that pretends to be interested in technological competitiveness. It is not necessary to believe that the plan will result in a police state to see that it is bad policy that will place a burden on U.S. industry while failing to help law-enforcement efforts.

**Gerard Epplin**
*St. Louis, Mo.*

*James Fallows replies:*

By the time I wrote my article about Clipper, two things had already occurred. Technologists and libertarians had publicized the reasons why the government should not adopt the Clipper standard, and the Clinton Administration had gone ahead and adopted it anyway. In the circumstances, I wanted to make a point that had not already been run into the ground: that the Clipper plan, while stupid, was not as ominous as its opponents had claimed.

I suppose we can always hope that someone in the government, after considering technical and commercial objections like those from Paul Baclace and Gerard Epplin, will say, "We've been so foolish!" and drop the Clipper plan. In the meantime, I stand by the message of my article, which is that anyone who really objects to this chip can avoid using it. Widespread use of a non-Clipper coding system like Philip Zimmerman's Pretty Good Privacy could make Clipper fade into irrelevance. The only remaining damage will be to American high-tech manufacturers, as Mr. Epplin points out.

## Immigration Proposal

It is obvious from the quotations from Jorge G. Castañeda ("A Bold Proposal on Immigration," by Jack Miles, June *Atlantic*) that, though he may be a noted Mexican intellectual, he is oblivious of the real world in a practical sense. He wants to set aside "all other cultural and economic issues" when looking at illegal


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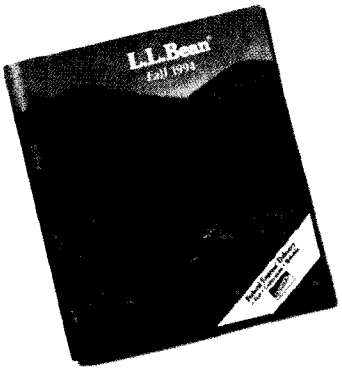
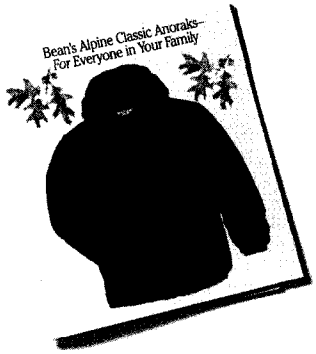



L.L.Change of Season

L.L.Places to Go

L.L.On the Road

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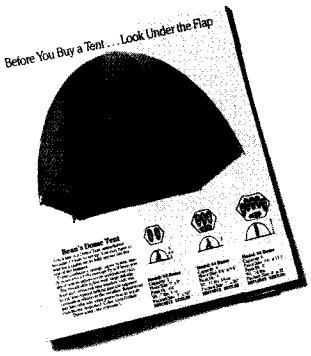


L.L.Outdoors

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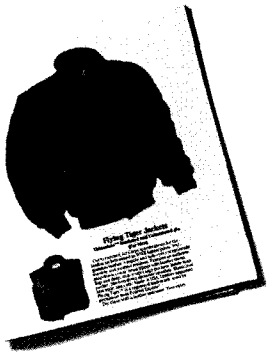
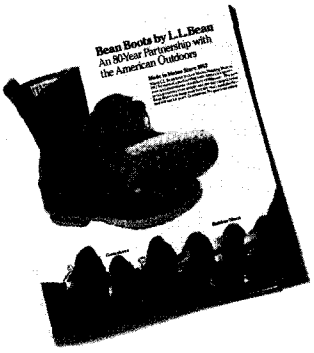


L.L.Classic

L.L.New

L.L.Perfect Fit

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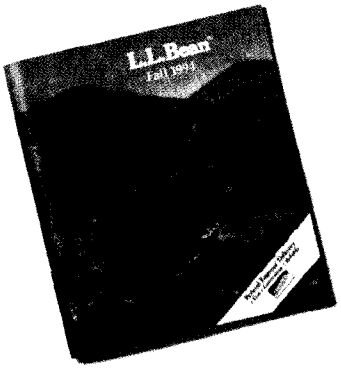


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immigration in California. Isn't that the whole point?

Illegal immigration is a social and economic issue. These people are not coming here for any other reason. Castañeda cites Sweden, Denmark, and Norway as allowing immigrants to vote on state and municipal issues. Castañeda forgets to mention that this applies to *legal* immigrants. I also point out that these countries don't automatically grant citizenship just because someone happens to be born there. The United States does.

We have to face not only the burdens of education and health services for the children of immigrants but usually the cost of delivery as well. Castañeda says that the illegals pay taxes. Certainly they are not paying income taxes that support the schools that educate their children. It is illegal to hire illegal aliens, and therefore no income taxes can be levied. Furthermore, with all the economic hardships facing our state, it's an insult to have to pay room and board for the immigrants (legal or not) who fill our penal system. I believe that deportation for illegal activities is widely used throughout the world. Why is it so different here?

Castañeda criticizes the "dedemocratization" of California occurring because illegals can't vote. Maybe all his deep thinking will come up with a way to cure Mexico's problems so that these people won't want to come to the United States. To have it his way, you should allow your next-door neighbors to vote on the color of your home's walls and carpet. After all, they may want to visit sometime. Why shouldn't they have a say?

**Lesley-Yvonne Moussette**
*Los Angeles, Calif.*

Jack Miles has every right to agree with the thrust of Jorge G. Castañeda's arguments. However, I think that many Californians have grave difficulty following a logic that says that illegals are victims of "political disenfranchisement" because they are not allowed to vote—almost as if they were innocent bystanders, their illegal status here perhaps something that they only now were beginning to discover. The trip north. The river. The fence. All should have been invaluable clues. Of course, not all illegals come from the same country, but the same principle applies. I once got turned around in Lodi, but I didn't end up disenfranchised, living illegally in Tashkent.

Maintaining national sovereignty by granting "foreigners the right to vote" may be a splendid idea in the gentle Netherlands, but here, where the desert meets the sea, the proposition is bold only insofar as it is daringly oxymoronic.

Although this is not necessarily true of Jack Miles, the press tends to see the problem of illegal immigration as one of Californians being angry, fearful, and confused, almost always to be read with the silent modifier "irrational." But today's strong public feelings on this matter come from the exact opposite direction. A majority of citizens now see only too clearly what has been going on, and they are determined to put a stop to it.

**Tom M. Andres**
*Santa Barbara, Calif.*

*Jack Miles replies:*

I proposed—as a solution to the problem of the dedemocratization of California owing to the growth here of a large, nonvoting population of illegal immigrants—first, a reassertion of control over the U.S.-Mexico border (this *can* be done), and second, the legalization and eventual naturalization of illegal immigrants already here.

Lesley-Yvonne Moussette agrees with the first half of my proposal but finds the second half "oblivious of the real world in a practical sense." The solution she prefers is deportation.

Let me point out that Ms. Moussette, as an Angeleno, resides in a city that is 40 percent Latin. Hundreds of thousands of citizens and legal immigrants in her city are indistinguishable in name, physical appearance, and even language from other hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants. That's why it is "so different here," and it's a huge difference. All other considerations aside, does Ms. Moussette really believe that it would be *practical* to arrest and deport so large a number of people?

It is the *practical* certainty that a large population of illegal immigrants is here to stay that also renders Tom Andres's objections moot. I may join him in proclaiming that *in principle* illegal immigrants have no right to the vote, that they knew they were losing this right when they crossed the border, and so forth. But then what? If, as I believe, mass deportation is out of the question, how is our democracy to be preserved except by regaining control of immigration and then—not before—extending the franchise?

## More on Guns

Daniel Polsby ("The False Promise of Gun Control," March *Atlantic*) should not be permitted the last word on the U.S. Constitution and guns. He is wrong in declaring (Letters, June *Atlantic*) that "the overwhelming weight of authority affirms that the Second Amendment establishes an *individual* right to bear arms." Consistent with other amendments that pertain to corporate rather than individual rights, the Second Amendment refers to "the people" rather than to "persons."

During the past two centuries several Supreme Court decisions and dozens of other federal court decisions have reiterated the purposes of the Second Amendment in a remarkably consistent manner. The 1875 *U.S.* v. *Cruikshank* case contains the judgment that the private ownership of arms is not a constitutional right. The 1939 *U.S.* v. *Miller* decision resulted from a challenge to the 1934 National Firearms Act, which required "gangster-style" weapons to be registered for interstate transportation. The high court unanimously ruled that the law was constitutional and that the Second Amendment does not guarantee private citizens the right to keep firearms unless there is evidence that their possession or use "has some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well regulated militia."

Stanley Chauvin, a former president of the American Bar Association, has observed that "the courts have uniformly held that the Second Amendment relates merely, solely, totally, and only to the unhampered regulation of a state militia. It does not confer an individual right." Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger has said that those who framed the Second Amendment "clearly intended to secure the right to bear arms essentially for military purposes."

**William E. Phipps**
*Elkins, W.Va.*

In his June reply to letters concerning his article on gun control, Daniel Polsby states that historians and constitutional



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scholars affirm that the Second Amendment establishes an individual right to bear arms. His formulation strongly implies that the phrase in the amendment which refers to the necessity of a militia has been discarded by these authorities. This is hardly possible. What is subject to interpretation is the nature of this militia, and certainly the last phrase of the amendment, with its allusion to "the people," suggests an open-ended definition. One view is that the militia includes all those who would be expected to come to the aid of the state and its institutions in an extremity such as invasion or insurrection. In any case, the authors of the amendment did begin by referring to a militia as the means to the security of a free state, and it is not our prerogative to delete that reference, or to ignore the authors' pointed use of modifiers: whatever the nature of this militia, it is to be regulated—indeed, it is to be *well* regulated. Few people would describe the use of firearms, especially handguns, in our country as well regulated. Through the years the National Rifle Association has fought against any such regulation, putting itself in opposition to a clearly stated specification of the amendment.

**Paul Crabtree**
*Mesquite, Texas*

*Daniel Polsby replies*:

How one should interpret the Second Amendment is a matter of opinion. How the drafters of the Second Amendment understood its text and function is also a matter of opinion, although here special weight is accorded to the views of professional historians and constitutional scholars who have inquired into the matter. What is not a matter of opinion is whether there is consensus among the community of constitutional scholars and historians concerning what the drafters' intentions were. That is a matter of fact, about which some former American Bar Association officials and retired Chief Justices are plainly misinformed. *The overwhelming burden of conviction among those who have published research on the Second Amendment is that its drafters meant it to secure an individual right that was not dependent on membership in an organized soldiery.* I have supplied the editors of *The Atlantic* with a fairly complete bibliography of the recent scholarship in the area, and will do the same for anyone who cares to write for it privately. I am also willing to correspond with readers who are interested in this subject, but it is not unreasonable to ask interlocutors to be familiar with at least some of the relevant literature.

Mr. Phipps's portrayal of *Cruikshank* misunderstands both its holding and its place in constitutional history. The case says that the Second Amendment does not create rights that an individual may assert against a state government. *Cruikshank also holds that the First Amendment creates no such rights.* It was standard learning at the time that the Bill of Rights constrained only national and not state government. Of course, this principle has been long since discarded; beginning in the 1930s the Supreme Court applied one provision of the Bill of Rights after another to the states.

One provision of the Bill of Rights that the Supreme Court has not held against the states is the Second Amendment. There has hardly been the chance; the high court has issued only one opinion in this century on the right to bear arms, and that involved a federal, not a state, law. As the Duke University law professor William Van Alstyne recently noted, "it is substantially accurate to say that the useful case law of the Second Amendment . . . is mostly just missing in action. In its place, what we have is roughly the same scanty and underdeveloped nature as [the] . . . case law (such as it then was) of the First Amendment in 1904, as of which date there was still to issue from the Supreme Court a single decision establishing the First Amendment as an amendment of any genuine importance at all." Hence the details of the right to bear arms, insofar as federal courts have a role in defining them, are at present open. Mr. Crabtree will be pleased to learn, however, that one of the few Second Amendment questions that the Supreme Court has answered is what constitutes "the militia." In the *Miller* case it wrote, "[The historical sources] show plainly enough that the Militia comprised all males physically capable of acting in concert for the common defense." The phrase "the right of the people" appears in the First and Fourth Amendments as well as the Second. In these contexts it has invariably been understood to affirm individual, not collective, rights.

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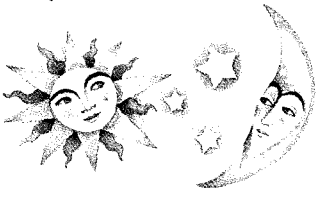
# THE SEPTEMBER ALMANAC

## Environment

September **5–13**, delegates from more than 180 countries meet in Cairo for the third UN International Conference on Population and Development. The meeting will focus on family planning and on educational and employment opportunities for women as ways to curb the birth rate; it could be the most rancorous ever. Pope John Paul II has railed against the failure of the conference's draft document to condemn abortion. The Vatican is also exercised that the document supports "family in all its diversity," a stance it says threatens traditional families, and that it endorses birth control for both married and unmarried women. Islamic countries, for their part, object to the emphasis on women's equality, especially in reproductive matters. The U.S. position on international family planning has shifted radically since the last conference, in 1984; unlike Presidents Reagan and Bush, President Clinton has been a staunch supporter, requesting $585 million from Congress for it next year.



## The Skies

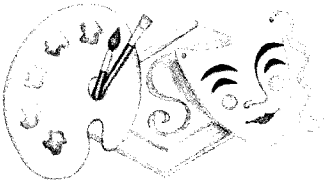
September **1**, Saturn reaches opposition—meaning that it is on the other side of the Earth from the Sun—and so is visible all night long for much of the month. **9**, Venus lies just south, and Jupiter just north, of the crescent Moon. **18**, Saturn lies below the nearly full Moon. **19**, Full Moon, also known this month as the Fruit or Feasting Moon and—because it is the Full Moon closest to the Autumnal Equinox—the Harvest Moon. **23**, at 2:19 A.M. EDT, the Autumnal Equinox, the end of summer.

## Health & Safety

September **12**, as of today all cigarettes sold in Canada must be accompanied by new health warnings. Among the bluntest in the world, the messages include "Smoking can kill you" and "Tobacco smoke causes fatal lung disease in non-smokers." The warnings must fill a quarter of a pack's front and back panels. Canada is, of course, only one of many industrialized countries trying to reduce smoking through legislation. Bans on all tobacco advertising are in place in several European countries, including Norway and Finland (where smoking has decreased) and Sweden and Italy (where, perversely, it has risen). Some of the world's most stringent anti-smoking measures are in Southeast Asia, led by Malaysia, where smokers who ignore prohibitions against lighting up in certain kinds of public places can be fined the equivalent of $20 on the spot.

## Arts & Letters

Efforts to resuscitate arts in the schools—typically the first programs to be cut under budgetary pressure—take a new tack this month, as some 500 arts educators, government officials, and business leaders meet in Louisville, Kentucky, for an arts conference with a determinedly pragmatic bent. "Arts Education for the 21st Century American Economy," sponsored by the American Council for the Arts on September **16–18**, will focus not only on the intrinsic value of the arts but also on their relevance as a "competitive tool" for the country's future work force. According to the ACA, employment-enhancing "arts-induced" skills include creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-discipline. Research supports this claim at least to some extent, suggesting that students who participate in activities such as music and drama often spend more time on schoolwork and get better grades than others, and may be more likely to stay in school.

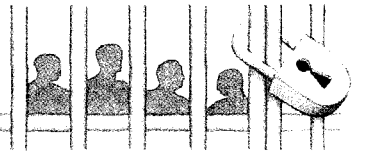


## Food

This month, for the first time, chocolate-lovers can buy an American-grown chocolate, as the Hawaiian Vintage Chocolate Company—the producer of the only commercial cacao crop in the United States—begins selling its chocolate in gourmet stores. Cacao's potential was long ignored in Hawaii, partly because of the islands' remoteness. Hawaii's isolation is now proving a boon: it provides protection from pests and diseases that plague cacao crops elsewhere. HVC growers can therefore forgo pesticides, allowing the company to market its chocolate as "all-natural" and thus capitalize on a huge interest in organic foods.

## Government

September **1**, a new penal code goes into effect today in Texas, introducing sweeping sentencing reforms and a new category of offenses, "state jail felonies"—minor drug offenses or nonviolent crimes against property. Perpetrators of such felonies will be housed in jails (new ones are scheduled for construction) rather than in prisons, which will be reserved for more-violent felons. Also with the new penal code Texas becomes the first state to repeal its AIDS law, under which knowingly exposing another person to AIDS was a felony. Texas was one of about 25 states that passed AIDS laws in the late 1980s; it has not convicted anyone under the statute, and from now on will pursue such cases under assault and attempted-murder charges instead.



## 25 Years Ago

Howard Luck Gossage, writing in the September, 1969, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "Our society views dying as being in questionable taste despite the fact that ten out of ten still do it. Perhaps it is part of our emphasis on eternal youthfulness as opposed to maturity. The life-span expands, and we have chosen to put the stretch on the early part. We apparently like to think of ourselves as being young or youngish right up to the moment when we proceed with bouncy step to retirement communities, there to live on forever in spry clusters of ranch-style death houses. . . . The price we pay for this pastel-washed denial of the only inevitable experience of life may be higher than we know. Our abnegation, as a people, of death may be the chief reason we seem to get so little genuine joy out of everyday life. For when life stretches out indefinitely, world without end, there is no yardstick for momentary pleasures, and passing pains are blown up out of all proportion."

Illustrations by Catherine Rose Crowther



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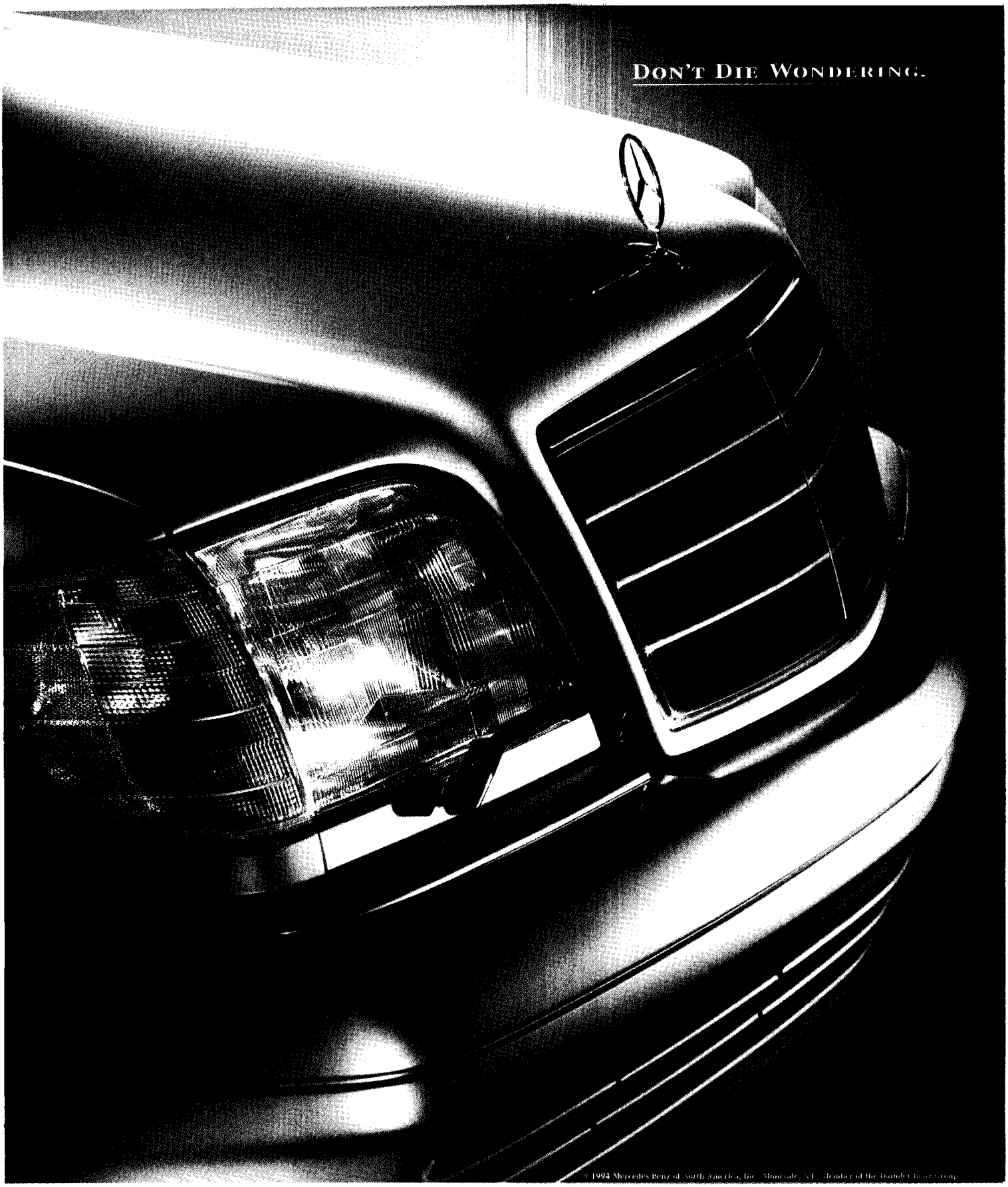


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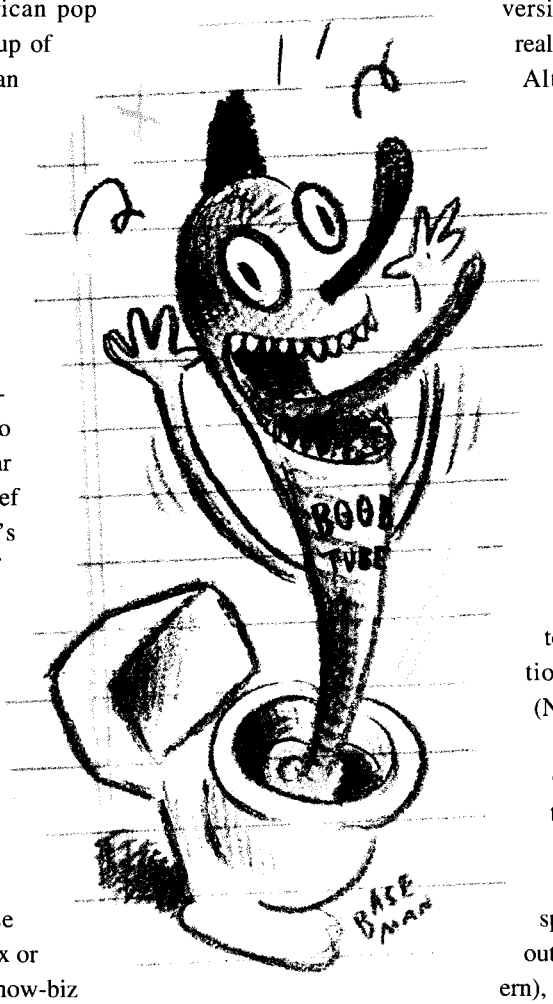
# Where the Boys Are

*Basically, everywhere in entertainment and infotainment*

**by Steven Stark**

OVER the past several years American pop culture has spawned a wide range of wildly popular offerings that appear remarkably similar in sensibility. Although at first glance little appears to link the infamous syndicated-radio talk-meisters Howard Stern and Don Imus with the movies *Jurassic Park* and *Field of Dreams*, the comedy of David Letterman and Jerry Seinfeld, the cartoon series *Beavis and Butt-head* and *The Simpsons*, and journalism's *The McLaughlin Group*, they in fact share a motif: though for the most part aimed at adults, these are all offerings that strongly echo the world of boys in early adolescence, ages eleven to fifteen. The unspoken premise of much of American pop culture today is that a large group of men would like nothing better than to go back to their junior high school locker rooms and stay there.

There is nothing new, of course, about men acting like boys, as anyone who has read the *Odyssey* or *Don Quixote* knows. But something different is going on today: never before have so many seemed to produce so much that is so popular to evoke what is, after all, a brief and awkward stage of life. What's more, the trend spans the range of popular culture. Take talk radio: One of its most popular approaches today is to offer the listener a world of close-knit boyish pals. The style of Stern and Imus is that of the narcissistic class cutup in seventh grade: both sit in a playhouse-like radio studio with a bunch of guys and horse around for hours talking about sex or sports, along with political and show-biz gossip, all the while laughing at the gang's consciously loutish, subversive jokes. To the extent that women participate, they are often treated to a barrage of sexual and scatological humor. It's no wonder the audience for both shows is predominantly male.




*Late Show With David Letterman* and *Seinfeld* similarly echo the ethos of young teenage boys. Late-night television has always been a chiefly male world, but until recently it wasn't a boy's world. One of Letterman's contributions to late-night entertainment has been to take its humor out of the nightclub-act tradition—replete with all of Johnny Carson's jokes about drinking or adult sex—and place it firmly in that prankish, subversive, back-of-the-classroom seventh-grade realm that has become so culturally prominent. Although Letterman rarely greets women guests with filthy jokes (you can't do that on network television), he often treats them with the exaggerated deference and shyness typical of fourteen-year-old boys.

Like a group of fourteen-year-olds, the men on *Seinfeld* seem not to hold regular jobs, the better to devote time to "the gang." One woman, Elaine, is allowed to tag along with the boys, much like those younger sisters who are permitted to hang out with their brothers. It's not simply that everyone in Seinfeld's gang is unmarried and pushing fortysomething. It's that given their personas, it's difficult to imagine any of them having a real relationship with any woman but his mother. (Note how much more often parents of adult children appear here than on other shows.) Compare this situation comedy with the one that was roughly its cultural predecessor, *Cheers*, which appeared in the same time slot. On that show, too, the men didn't spend much time at work, but they did hang out in a traditional domain of adults (the tavern), and the hero, Sam Malone, spent many of his waking hours chasing women. Seinfeld is

Illustrations by Gary Baseman



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The area of Los Austrias, Madrid

## At night, Madrileños undergo an amazing transformation.

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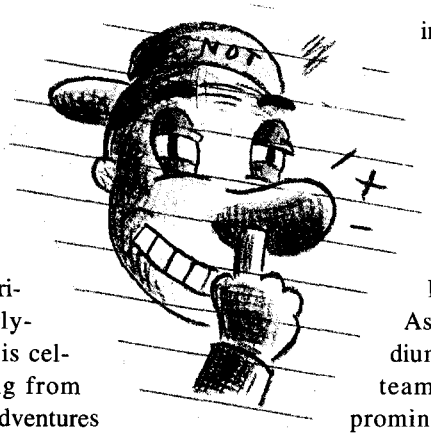
better known for sitting in a diner eating french fries with his pals. One of the show's most celebrated "risqué" episodes was about—what else?—masturbation.




And so it goes in various ways, as the early-teen male sensibility is celebrated in everything from *Wayne's World* (the adventures of two adolescent goofballs) to *The Simpsons* (starring the proud underachiever Bart) to *Beavis and Butt-head* (MTV's notorious early-adolescent icons). The heavy-metal sound of bands with names like Danzig, Gwar, and Genitorturers is in vogue now, and with its constant evocation of sexism, violence, and hostility for hostility's sake, that rock genre has always reeked of the adolescent experience more than others have.

Like many recent cinema hits, ranging from the Indiana Jones series to most Arnold Schwarzenegger offerings, last year's blockbuster film *Jurassic Park* was largely a traditional teenage "boys' movie"—heavy on adventure and violence, light on romance and relationships. Psychologists have observed that the culture-wide trend toward "pumped-up" male heroes—Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, and half the guys at your local health club—is a pre-teen male fantasy brought to life. Even popular "adult" movies, such as *City Slickers* and *Big*, often revolve around the premise that once a man has passed through puberty, it's pretty much all downhill.

The cult of baseball can be seen as an intensely nostalgic return to early adolescence for many Americans. The rite of Rotisserie League baseball—an activity in which men spend hours every week poring over sheets of statistics, as they did when they were young—is part of this phenomenon, as are the wearing of baseball hats and the collecting of autographs and baseball cards by men of all ages. So, too, are baseball-movie parables like the quasi-religious *Field of Dreams*, in which male adolescence, the pastoral life, and baseball are linked in a way that would make both Jean Jacques Rousseau and Casey Stengel proud. In these visions of utopia, of course, women are again peripheral—except, perhaps, when baking cookies or waving in maternal fashion from the front porch as Dad and Son play catch. In the 1955 America that is usually the baseball lover's Paradise Lost, there are no Astroturf, no new stadiums, and no western teams to challenge the prominence of New York and the eastern urban society it represents. That America is not only a man's world but also, by and large, a white man's world.

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Today's early-adolescent attitude is certainly on display throughout the news media. It's not simply that in a tabloid age many publications have adopted a kind of sneering, sophomoric attitude toward public affairs, or that shows such as *Crossfire* and *The McLaughlin Group*—with their mostly male screaming casts—resemble nothing so much as a junior high social-studies debate (in which the girls were always shouted down by the boys regardless of what they had to say). It's that today's journalism is obsessed with the kinds of things that tend to preoccupy thirteen-year-old boys: sports, sex, crime, and narcissism—that is, itself. Also in journalism as currently practiced, reporters often set themselves up as passive observers of events and then spend much of their time identifying with those who exercise real power—a point of view that is reminiscent of the way a young teenager views his parents. Moreover, if today's journalism has a driving principle, that principle centers on an obsession with hypocrisy. Journalism is about many things, but these days it is often about revealing that public figures are phonies. Covering Bill Clinton, or Prince Charles, or Michael Jackson, reporters frame their stories by saying implicitly, "These people aren't what they say they are. Look, they lied to you." Although there is a cultural role for balloon deflators, journalism has brought this characteristic attitude of the early adolescent to the adult world and elevated it to the status of cultural religion. That's why much of journalism today is really a form of institutionalized early adolescence.

Because the press tends to set the agenda for our culture, these sentiments have enormous ramifications. Whether in the form of the media's obsession with violence or its preoccupation with polls and popularity, the fantasy life of the adolescent male ends up defining much of our political reality. Political coverage tends to focus on gaffes, girlfriends, and youthful indiscretions while far more important, "adult" issues go underreported.

The press has also seen to it that the cardinal sin in American politics today is not to run up a deficit or lose an important court case but to change one's mind: like a fourteen-year-old, the press always takes a switch as evidence of hypocrisy. Thus George Bush was skewered by the media in 1990 for flip-flopping on the issue of taxes, and Bill Clinton was attacked unmercifully last year for going back on his promise of a tax cut for the middle class. Maybe both men had misled the voters during their campaigns, but a less iconoclastic press corps might have concluded that both men changed their minds for unselfish policy reasons. While an adolescent often looks at a change in direction and sees deceit, an adult realizes that life is usually more complex than that. Mature leaders recognize their mistakes and often adjust accordingly—though not without peril in today's climate.

Admittedly, too much can be made of all this. Entertainment has always evoked certain stages of life in ways that appeal to the masses: think of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Rebel Without a Cause*. The fourteen-year-old sensibility is certainly not the only one celebrated in a culture that includes *The Golden Girls*, *Murphy Brown*, and Barney the dinosaur. And it's true that other eras in America have celebrated youth in various forms, from Shirley Temple to the Brady Bunch. But it's hard to make the case that the male early-adolescent mind-set was as pervasive or influential in those eras as it is in this one.

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There are, of course, antecedents in our cultural life for this veneration of male early adolescence. The western often celebrated the young cowboy or outlaw like Billy the Kid, who, surrounded by his loyal gang in a world without commitment to women, broke the rules. In his recent book, *American Manhood*, E. Anthony Rotundo shows how American culture came to celebrate the misbehavior of boys as a way of idolizing the traits of childishness without idolizing children. In *Love*


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*and Death in the American Novel* (1960) Leslie Fiedler traces the evolution of the "bad boy" in American fiction from its roots in late-nineteenth-century best-sellers like *Peck's Bad Boy* and *The Story of a Bad Boy*. He also describes American fiction's traditional preoccupation with "The Good Bad Boy"—from Huckleberry Finn to Holden Caulfield to the characters in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Fiedler wrote, "The Good Bad Boy is, of course, America's vision of itself, crude and unruly in his beginnings, but endowed by his creator with an instinctive sense of what is right."

Thirty-four years ago Fiedler wrote that from the Puritan-influenced Hawthorne and Melville on, Americans had been drawn to tales of boys and neutered women as a way of avoiding the subject of sex. In a tabloid era of penis-mutilation trials, prime-time network nudity, condom ads, and endless talk-show discussions of sexual fetishes, however, it's hard to continue to make his case. Still, if early-adolescent boys are notable for their inclinations to look at dirty pictures and talk about sex, they aren't quite ready to do something about it responsibly with a woman. That propensity to be in the world of sex but not really of it is certainly a sign of the times.

What's more, even if men aren't trying to avoid sex today, a retreat into teenhood may be a convenient way to avoid the opposite sex. As Susan Faludi and other writers have noted, the women's movement—perhaps the greatest social change of our time—has triggered something of a well-documented backlash. One result may be the creation of this boyish countermovement that looks with nostalgic longing on perhaps the last period in life when it's socially acceptable for males to exclude women, if not deride them.

The reasons for the cultural ubiquity of male early adolescence have little to do with puritanism. Many psychologists consider that stage of life, when one is acutely aware of being powerless, to be the time when individuals are most subversive of the society at large. That idea also fits a wider cultural mood, always somewhat prevalent in America, that exalts the outsider. Such an anti-establishment mood, rooted in powerlessness, is particularly strong today, and the proof is not simply in the Ross Perot phenomenon. Whether the subject is how the tabloid press now eagerly tears down public figures or the pervasiveness of gossip masquerading as news (to demonstrate how the famous are no better than anyone else) or the rise of anti-establishment talk radio and comedy clubs where the humor grows more derisive by the day, America is full of the defiant, oppositional anger that often characterizes the early adolescent.

That anger is also an asset for TV programmers in the cable era. Television, of course, tends to encourage a kind of passivity that isn't ultimately much different from the angry powerlessness early teens tend to feel: Beavis and Butt-head have become cultural symbols precisely because a nation of couch potatoes feels like a nation of fifteen-year-olds. Moreover, in an age of multiple offerings and channel surfing, what tends to draw these passive audiences is the irately outrageous and exhibitionistic—the Howard Sterns, not the Arthur Godfreys. It also doesn't hurt that adolescents tend to be what advertisers call "good consumers"—narcissistic, with a fair amount of disposable income, and with no one but themselves to spend it on. A culture that is obsessed with this stage of life is arguably in a better frame of mind to buy—to run up the limit on Dad's (or Uncle Sam's) credit card—than one that worships, say, thrifty middle age.

In a country whose citizens have always had tendencies that remind observers of those of a fourteen-year-old boy, it would be wrong to lay all the blame for society's vulgarity and violence, its exhibitionist inclinations, its fear of powerful women, its failure to grow up and take care of its real children, and its ambivalence about paternal authority at the feet of Howard Stern, John McLaughlin, and Jerry Seinfeld. But they have helped, and many of us have willingly obliged. After all, as Fiedler reminded us, boys will be boys.


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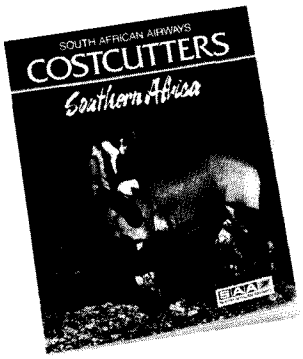


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# An African Success Story?

*Uganda, of all places, is enjoying a period of peace, but the price of stability has been high*

**by Bill Berkeley**

YOWERI Museveni is a bear of a man with an avuncular style that has disarmed many a visitor. Politician, intellectual, former guerrilla leader, and, since 1986, the President of Uganda, Museveni is widely hailed as a new kind of African leader. The darling of Western donors, he minces no words about the "backwardness" of his country. He says things like "I have never blamed the whites for colonizing Africa; I have never blamed these whites for taking slaves. If you are stupid, you should be taken a slave." Sitting in the shade of a huge flame tree on his cattle farm in southwest Uganda, sipping from a glass of piping-hot fresh cow's milk, the President speaks ironically, Socratically, turning questions back on his questioner, chuckling at his own answers.

But his mission could not be more serious. He is trying to achieve what many feared no one could: to bring Uganda back from the dead. Uganda occupies a singular place among the horror-plagued countries of post-independence Africa. In the 1970s and early 1980s Idi Amin, and the less notorious but no less wanton Milton Obote, plunged Uganda into a nightmare as dark and sinister as the one that has unfolded just across its southern border in Rwanda. Perhaps a million Ugandans died in two decades of sheer terror.

The road from the capital, Kampala, to Museveni's farm cuts through lush tropical mountains straddling the Equator along the edge of Lake Victoria. Banana palms, coffee plantations, and bougainvillea in perpetual bloom—this is the hauntingly beautiful landscape that moved Winston Churchill to call Uganda the "pearl" of East Africa. When I first traveled this road, a decade ago, teenage soldiers in baggy battle fatigues and rubber flip-flops, with bloodshot eyes and slurred speech, manned dozens of checkpoints, poking their AKs into taxis, shaking down travelers, often raping women and girls. My notebooks were filled with tales of torture and massacres.

Today the road is newly paved, and there are no roadblocks. The streets are safe at night, markets bustle, and nightclubs pulsate to the twangy rhythms of the latest hits from neighboring Zaire. At the time of my return, last spring, nearly all of Uganda's immediate neighbors were in turmoil. To the south Rwanda and Burundi were convulsed by ethnic slaughter in which hundreds of thousands had been killed. Zaire, on Uganda's western border, was in the throes of "ethnic cleansing" as Mobutu Sese Seko maneuvered to survive in power. To the north thousands of Sudanese were in flight from the Sudanese army's latest offensive against southern rebels, as the latest phase of Sudan's civil war entered its second decade. Even Kenyans, on Uganda's eastern border, who for years had viewed Uganda's agony with a mixture of horror and disdain, were beset by yet another round of state-inspired ethnic clashes, which have shaken Kenya's reputation for stability. Uganda, of all places, looked like a model of tranquillity. A decade earlier I had felt a rush of relief when I exited Uganda for what was then pacific Rwanda; this year I experienced precisely the opposite sensation.

"Uganda is out of the woods," Museveni told me. But the twinkle in his eye masks toughness, arrogance, even ruthlessness. He has not stayed on top of Uganda by being soft. Almost alone among African leaders, Museveni has managed to secure broad international support while defying Western pressure for multi-party democracy. He argues that multi-partyism aggravates tribal divisions. It is a familiar argument, made by many a cynical African leader as a means of rationalizing absolute power. But such is Uganda's uniquely fractious past that his argument is rarely dismissed out of hand. Uganda is a place where a top-ranking Western diplomat, lamenting the arrests of three leading "multi-partyists" on sedition charges, could nonetheless

***Above, voting in Uganda last spring***

Photographs by Mary Jane Camejo



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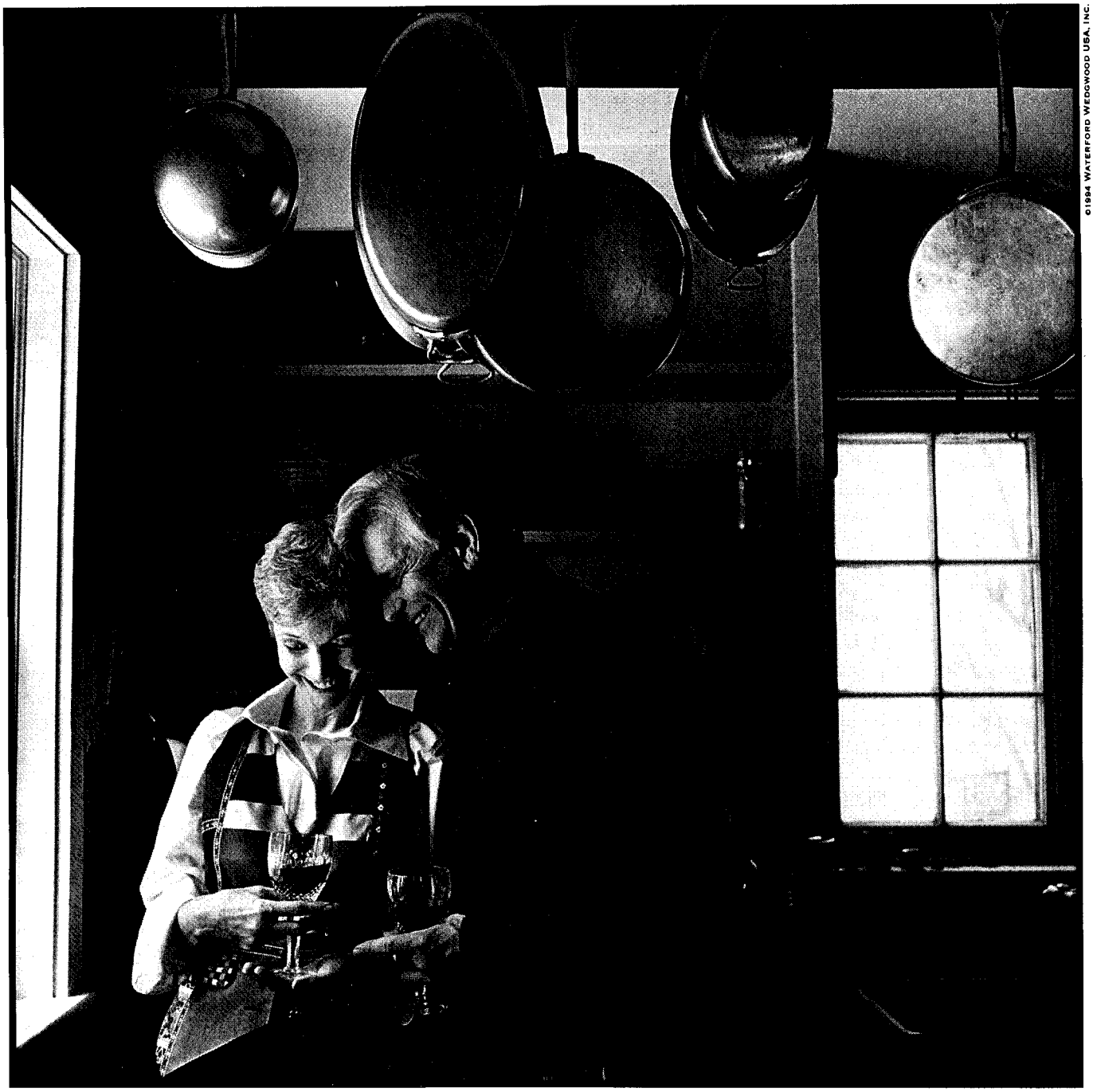
IT'S SURELY NO ACCIDENT THAT THE MOST UNIVERSAL TOAST IS, "TO LIFE."



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*"Uganda is out of the woods," Museveni told me. But the twinkle in his eye masks toughness, even ruthlessness.*

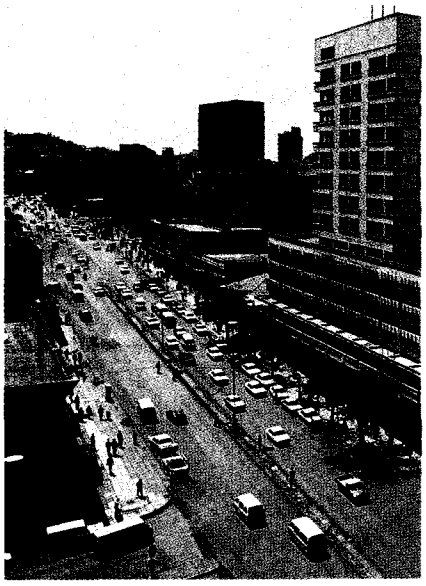
suggest that "Museveni may have calculated that it is time to demonstrate power, and he may be right—safety first."

At the time of my visit Ugandans were electing members of a constituent assembly that will ratify a new constitution. It was a dress rehearsal for parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for next year. The central issue for voters was whether to elect candidates who favored "multi-partyism" or those who favored continuing for five more years with Museveni's all-inclusive—some say too inclusive—"movement" system. Alas, most of the multi-partyists looked less like Jeffersonian democrats than like partisans of the old Obote regime, bent on reclaiming power by aggravating ethnic divisions. The campaign opened a window on a stubbornly polarized country at a crossroads—battling AIDS, still very poor, and still largely dependent on the personal authority of one man, Museveni. Most Ugandans were living in peace. The question was how long it might last.

THE VIP lounge at The Nile Hotel, in Kampala, is directly below room 311. In the years of Amin and Obote room 311 was a torture chamber. Beatings, whippings, electric shocks, burns on the chest and testicles—the cries emanating from room 311 may have been audible down on the second floor, where Amin and Obote occupied rooms during some of their years in power. Nile Mansions, as it was then called, provided the only decent accommodation in town, and thus housed much of the Cabinet, army, and secret police. Today the Nile is a metaphor for Uganda, a functioning entity with a fresh coat of paint. Room 311 is a plush suite with crimson carpeting, glass tabletops, and a superchic bathroom; a Gideon's Bible rests on the bedside table. "It's a different story altogether," the receptionist said when I was there. "It has shed a bad name."

Sitting on a sofa in the VIP lounge, sipping from a glass of passion-fruit juice, was the man who had ousted Obote in a coup in July of 1985, Major General Tito Okello Lutwa. Tito Okello commanded the force of Ugandan exiles who, along with the Tanzanian army, invaded Uganda in 1979 and drove Amin from power. Okello's forces then helped Milton Obote, whom Amin had displaced in a 1971 coup, to steal the 1980 election. From 1980 to 1985 Okello was the commander of Obote's army, the Uganda National Liberation Army. Under Okello's command UNLA soldiers slaughtered thousands of civilians in Amin's old stronghold, a region known as West Nile. They killed tens of thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands, more in the region north of Kampala known as the Luwero Triangle, where Museveni's insurgency was based. Ultimately Okello turned on Obote. The six months of Okello's tenure as head of state were the most chaotic in Uganda's history; Kampala disintegrated into Beirut-like fiefs controlled by warlords and murderous gangs. Museveni's forces seized the capital in January of 1986, and Okello fled into exile. He was invited back in November of last year with the promise of amnesty—and armed protection.

Now eighty years old, carrying a cane of gold and carved ebony, dressed in a dark-brown suit and a blue necktie with a pattern of crossed Winchester rifles, Okello seemed fit, good-natured, wily. He told me that love of his country and the lure of "fifteen to twenty grandchildren" had brought him back. He spoke in Acholi, his native tongue, which was translated for me by his aide-de-camp.



*Kampala: back to business*

Okello's career tracked the history of Uganda in microcosm. Like many young Acholis before and after, Okello sought his fortune as a soldier, joining the old British colonial army, the King's African Rifles, at the start of the Second World War. He fought against the Italians in Eritrea and against the Japanese in Burma. After the war he was an instructor in the colonial force that crushed the nationalist Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya. It was in the King's African Rifles that Okello met Idi Amin, who reminded him then of a hyena, he told me—"always looking to steal, wary of others, not a stable man."

At independence from Britain, in 1962, Uganda, an example of colonial mapmaking at its most arbitrary, was already vulnerable even by the standards of postcolonial Africa to the destructive forces of sectarianism and ethnicity. Its borders had been drawn up by the European colonial powers at the oft-lamented Berlin conference of 1884, with little regard to the interests of the indigenous peoples. Some forty distinct ethnic groups were roped together.

As elsewhere in the British Empire, from Nigeria to South Africa to India, the system of "indirect rule" accentuated ethnic differences by vesting unaccountable power in tribal chiefs and by divvying up schooling and jobs according to the time-honored method of divide and rule. The Baganda, whose kingdom was the most advanced and whose lands in the fertile mountainous region around their capital, Kampala, were the best suited to export crops, were favored for posts in the colonial service—and thus for the schooling needed to fill them. Stereotyped as warlike, the Nilotics of the north—the Acholi and Langi, and also the Kakwa, Idi Amin's tribe—filled out the ranks of the colonial army, along with Nubians from Sudan who were brought in as mercenaries.

Comparable conditions existed in nearly all the countries of postcolonial Africa, yet not all degenerated to the depths that Uganda did. It is not true that Africa's many tribes are inevitably prone to conflict and bloodshed; most, even among Uganda's forty-odd tribes, live side by side in relative harmony. In Uganda as elsewhere, though, inherent divisions were compounded by feeble institutions of law and civil society, which left the



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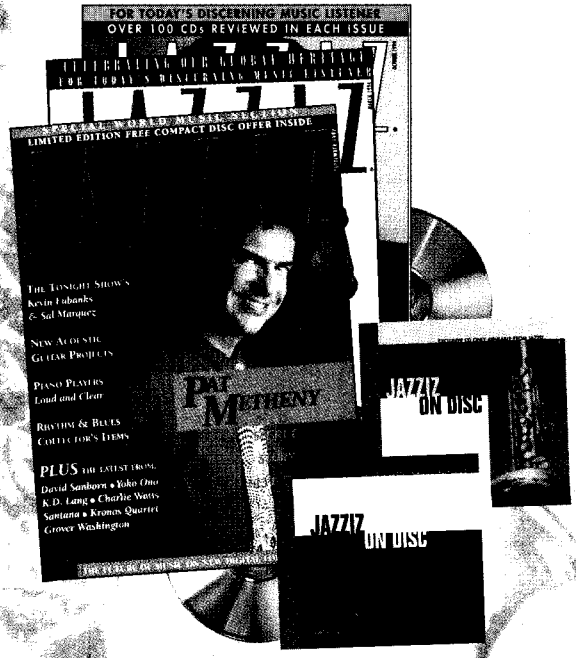


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country especially vulnerable to the idiosyncratic personalities of its leaders. "What happened here was not inevitable," Grace Ibingira told me. Ibingira, a veteran Ugandan politician, was Justice Minister in Obote's first Cabinet before he was jailed for five years, and served as ambassador to the United Nations under Amin until he went into exile. "It all had to do with the personalities of the people involved at critical periods in our history."

Milton Obote now lives in Zambia in what is by all accounts a mostly drunken exile; Ugandans say that he was often publicly drunk while in power. Obote never achieved the worldwide infamy of Idi Amin, but his impact on Uganda was just as destructive. Unlike Amin, Obote was a weak and paranoid leader who handled the army with kid gloves. He created the opening for the rule of the gun. Idi Amin was Obote's hatchet man. "Amin had two qualifications," Ibingira recalled. "The first was that he was ruthless, so Obote could unleash him. The second was that Amin was illiterate. Obote believed that Amin would not aspire to overthrow him. There he was wrong."

THE descent into chaos began in earnest with the so-called Buganda crisis, in 1966, when Obote, the country's first Prime Minister, suspended the constitution and ordered army units under Amin's command to attack the palace of the Kabaka, the popular hereditary king of the Baganda, who were Uganda's largest and most prosperous tribe. Over the next five years Obote oversaw the cumulative militarization of power, which became blatant when Amin led a successful coup in January of 1971. The militarization of politics fragmented the army and security forces, largely along ethnic lines. As first Amin's faction and later Obote's assumed power, they set about liquidating their predecessors and the predecessors' families and presumed civilian supporters—along with the supporters of new insurgencies, which inevitably arose in response.

"It was just open, straightforward, the fighting that took place in Uganda," Tito Okello told me. "It was a big war." I asked him about the Luwero Triangle. "The allegations were one-sided," Okello replied. "The deaths should not be attributed to one side only."

***President Yoweri Museveni, at his cattle farm***

Okello would appear to be a war criminal. That he is back in Uganda is a testament to Museveni's policy of cooptation rather than confrontation. Civilian officials from previous regimes and hundreds of members of the myriad erstwhile fighting forces, police and intelligence units, private militias, and bandit gangs have been lured out of the bush or exile and integrated into Museveni's umbrella-like National Resistance Movement and its National Resistance Army. The goal is reconciliation. Thus very few people have been held accountable for past crimes; a great many Ugandans have quite literally gotten away with murder. I asked Okello if he has any crimes to answer for. "Even up until now people still like me," he replied. "I am a man of peace."

"*DEMBE kintu kikulu, eeh, eeh, dembe kintu kikulu, eeh*"—"Peace is very important, yes, yes, peace is very important, yes." The singers were lined up twelve in a row before President Museveni, with the drummers in front, in a clearing on the edge of Wobulenzi, a rural trading center in the Luwero Triangle. In the early 1980s Luwero came to be known as the killing fields of Uganda. Luwero is where Museveni waged his five-year guerrilla struggle against Obote—and where Obote's marauding gang of an army waged its wanton, largely indiscriminate, ultimately futile counterinsurgency campaign. Perhaps 300,000 civilians were killed. A quarter of Luwero's children were orphaned.

Peace is very important, yes, and most Ugandans are living in peace. The economy is picking up. Schools and hospitals have reopened. Refugees have returned. Ugandans are living with hope. "Let's agree on the essential points," Museveni told me. "Regular elections, universal franchise, free press, separation of powers."

But peace can also be relative. If Museveni has friends in Luwero and throughout the south of Uganda, he also has enemies, mainly in the north and east. After NRA forces took power in 1986, in a continuation of the familiar cycle remnants of Obote's UNLA army went back into the bush in the north to wage yet another guerrilla campaign. The NRA has been battling a succession of insurgencies in the north ever since, by turns crushing and coopting the insurgents and their supporters. Not a few civilians have been killed.

When I met Museveni at his farm, I asked him what it would take to arrest so entrenched a cycle of ethnic violence. "What Europeans and Americans call ethnicity in this context is actually backwardness—social and economic backwardness," Museveni said. "Africa is preindustrial. It does not have a middle class. Its dominant opinions are held by peasants. Their attitudes are often parochial. They do not have a vested interest in cosmopolitanism or in nationalism."

The President was, obliquely, making the case for his economic program as a key to stability. It is a virtual textbook adaptation of the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment program: free markets, a convertible currency, an independent central bank, selling off state-owned companies, tight budgets,



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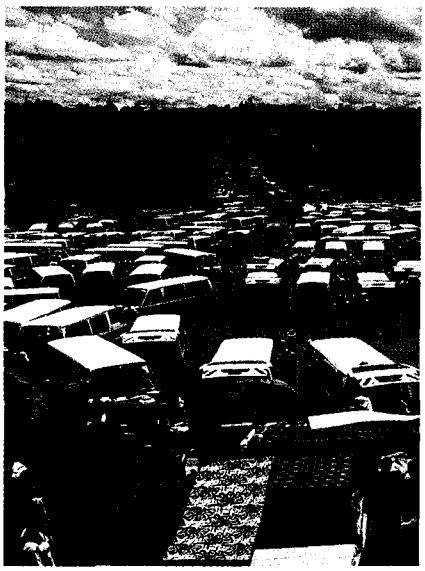
and downsizing the civil service and the army. Museveni has invited back Uganda's Asians, whom Amin expelled in the early 1970s, and has returned their property. His aim is to attract investors and build a middle class. "If there is a middle class, it will cut across ethnic groups," Museveni said. Not surprisingly, some of Museveni's most fervent support comes from the growing number of Ugandans who have come to be known as "my cars"—members of a modernized elite who can't stop talking about their cars.

"Backwardness" is also Museveni's explanation for the dangers of multi-partyism. His argument is simple: multi-party democracy works where social divisions are horizontal, based on class. In Africa the divisions are vertical, based on tribe, and political parties inevitably reflect that vertical division. In Uganda this is not just an academic point. The existing parties are in fact closely identified with ethnic and sectarian interests—and with the regimes that represented those interests to the detriment of others. Milton Obote's old Uganda Peoples Congress remains a force in Ugandan politics, and is identified with northerners, mostly Acholis and Langis. Although the UPC and other parties were barred from publicly backing candidates during the campaign, the party allegiances of most candidates were well known, and "pro-multi-party" or "multi-partyist" was in many cases code for pro-UPC.

Three weeks before election day, in a widely criticized move, three top UPC leaders were arrested and charged with sedition. The charges stemmed from a manifesto published by the UPC which alleged that Museveni's government was dominated by "foreigners"—specifically, Banyarwandans, people of Rwandan origin. Many top officials in Museveni's NRA were, in fact, Rwandan refugees, primarily Tutsis, who had settled in

***Ugandans need only look next door to see how fleeting peace can be. Rwanda had decades of peace.***



***Taxis await fares in Kampala***

Uganda after fleeing ethnic violence in Rwanda decades earlier; others were Ugandans of Rwandan descent. In 1982 President Obote expelled more than 80,000 Banyarwandans from southwest Uganda. Many returned to the country as NRA guerrillas, and when Museveni took power, they took power with him. Now Obote's old UPC allies, campaigning as "multi-partyists," were raising doubts about Museveni's ethnicity as a means of discrediting his government. Museveni ordered them arrested.

"They are criminals," Museveni told me with evident bitterness. "These multi-partyists are not committed to multi-party politics. It is a means of dividing the people. We look at them as traitors. They are opportunists manipulating ethnic divisions."

Clearly Museveni has an authoritarian streak, but his comments underscore the complexity of Uganda's predicament. What he says about the multi-partyists undoubtedly is true: many are, in fact, cynical partisans of a discredited regime that murdered thousands. Not a few Ugandans who are otherwise critical of the "movement" system nevertheless defended the sedition arrests as a necessary evil.

Meanwhile, at the height of the election campaign, Museveni's army was battling in the north with yet another remnant of the old insurgent forces, a ragtag collection of bandits who call themselves the Lord's Resistance Army. The sometimes heavy-handed counterinsurgency campaign was reviving old enmities. "This fear is coming up again," I was told when I visited the northern provincial capital of Gulu, where some said Museveni was scarcely better than Idi Amin. "Museveni is more educated," I was told. "Museveni is a learned killer."

An extreme view, perhaps, but reports of army abuses, though not generally considered on a scale comparable with those from past regimes, were consistent with the record of abuses the army committed during previous NRA campaigns against northern insurgents. Amnesty International has documented beatings, torture, and massacres of unarmed civilians, including children and whole families. When I asked Museveni about these allegations, he said, "I don't dispute them. What I don't agree with is the charge that we condone abuses, that we know about but ignore abuses, that we cover up abuses. In fact we have executed soldiers who committed abuses." Indeed, Amnesty International, which opposes the death penalty, protested in 1992 that more than forty soldiers had been executed since 1987. "Amnesty says executions are too harsh," Museveni continued. "We still apply the law of Moses. We still say an eye for an eye. If you kill someone, you must die."

The constituent-assembly elections were Uganda's first legitimate balloting since independence from Britain, in 1962, and foreign election observers judged them generally free and fair. Museveni's "pro-movement" candidates won two thirds of the seats, but multi-partyists won nearly all the seats in the north, underlining the degree to which the country remains polarized along ethnic lines.

UGANDA'S continued polarization is worrisome not just because of the legacy of past ethnic conflict but because of the continued absence or weakness of the mediating institutions of civil society. Amin and Obote destroyed the rule of law in Uganda. Museveni, to his credit, has sought to re-establish it. He virtually scrapped the discredited police force he inherited in 1986 and has hired and trained a new one. With Western aid he is rebuilding a cowed and withered judiciary—he told me there were only "three or four" high-court justices left in the entire country when he came to power. He has also worked to diversify and professionalize the army. By all accounts (except in the north), the progress on these fronts has been remarkable. But there is still a long way to go, and abuses still occur.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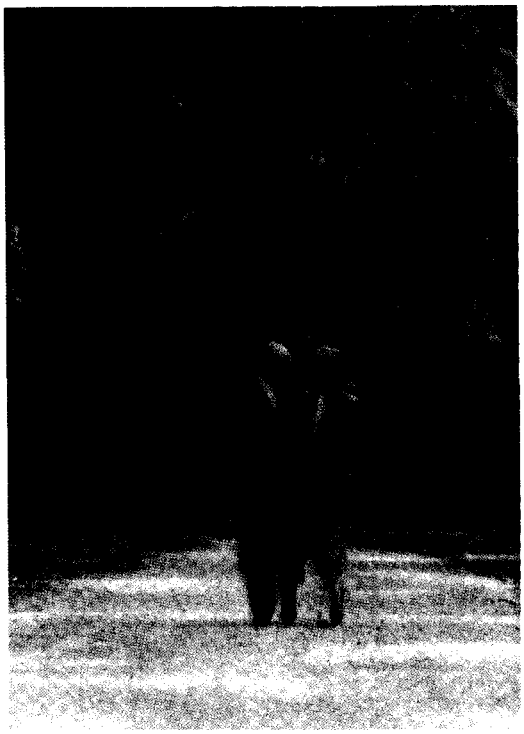

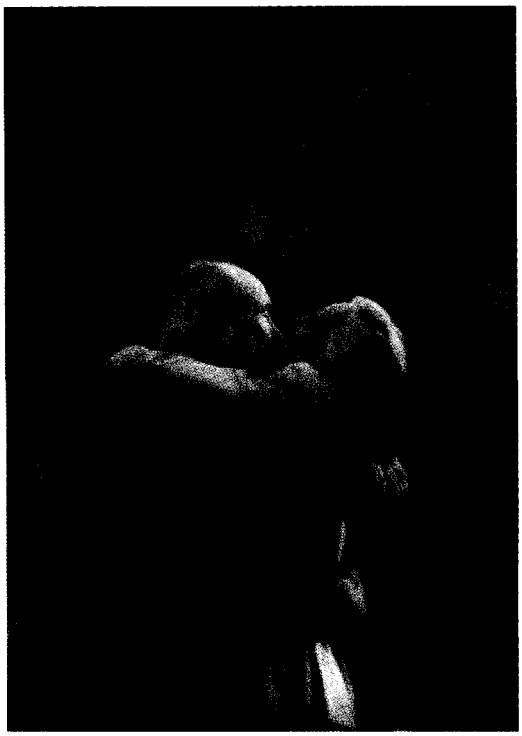

# There are times when he

can go hours without saying a word. And yet, she still knows exactly what he's thinking. It's something you have to experience to truly understand. If you have, no explanation is necessary. If you haven't, no explanation is possible.

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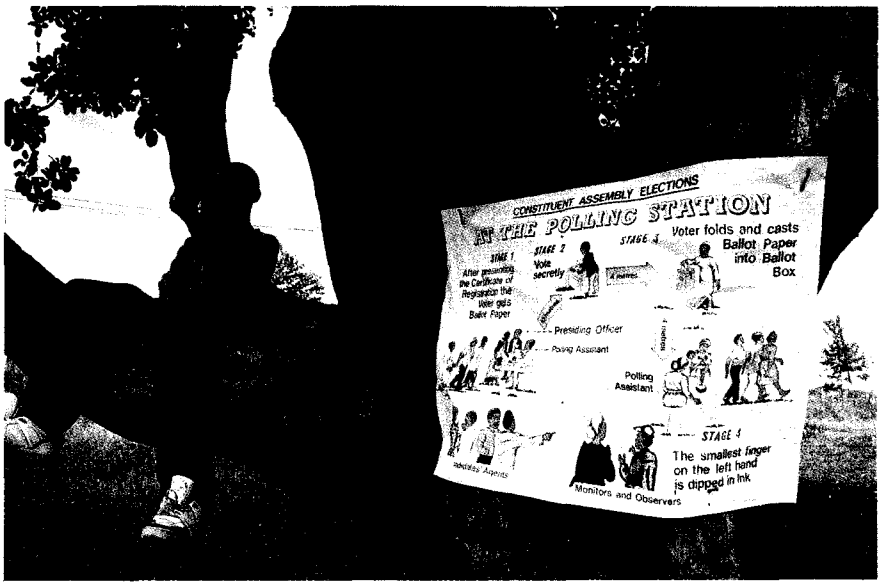
One of Museveni's first acts when he came to power, in 1986, was to establish a human-rights commission to document the country's history of abuses and, many Ugandans hoped, identify and prosecute the culprits. The results have been disappointing. Inevitably, past regimes were closely identified with particular regions and tribes; going after accused human-rights abusers was perceived in those regions as persecuting their tribes. In some instances communities refused to cooperate with investigators, shielding criminals in their midst on grounds of ethnic solidarity. And there was concern that because so many people had blood on their hands, settling accounts would be impossible.




***Musevenian democracy? Voting procedures explained, in Kampala***

The recurring insurgencies in the north also created problems. Many northern insurgents, who had fought for Obote, were motivated by fear that they would be brought to account by a government dominated by southerners. In 1987 a broad amnesty was declared, in hopes of luring northern rebels out of the bush. This was Museveni's strategy of "buying peace." He offered rebels a chance to be integrated into the national army. Many of them took it. "We thought that trying to punish everybody would be an endless process," Museveni told me.

The downside, of course, is that a great many murderers are at large. "A government has given an amnesty, but the people against whom these crimes have been committed didn't give that amnesty—the people have not forgiven them," Joan Kakwenziri, a historian who serves on the Human Rights Commission, says. "Amnesty is really just a cover-up of the problem. It's like pushing dirt and dust under the rug. Eventually it begins to smell. It doesn't work." Of course, the NRM now has its own crimes to answer for in the north. "I think they feel quite inadequate to be the judges," Kakwenziri said.

OTHERS, too, worry about the country's future. Ugandans need only look across their borders to know how fleeting peace can be. Rwanda had three decades of peace. Sudan has had seventeen years of war, eleven years of peace, and then, since 1983, a decade more of ruinous war, with no end in sight. Yet Sudan also teaches that multi-party democracy is no panacea: it had such a democracy for three years, until in 1989 it was swept away by a military coup led by Islamic fundamentalists.

Uganda and its army still revolve around the personal leadership of Museveni, who has shown, for better or worse, that he can be as authoritarian as he is visionary. Museveni has said that he will step down after five more years. "My cows are crying for me," he told me with a chuckle. "My mission is now almost accomplished, which is to orient my people toward modernization. We shall complete this process of democratization."

Not many Ugandans I spoke with were so confident. "The stability of Uganda hinges on one man," said Billy O'Kadimiri, an Acholi journalist in Gulu whose support for the movement has put him at odds with many of his neighbors. "National sanity and international respect revolve around one man. In a situation of vacuum of leadership there will be a direct slide to anarchy. People are still not sure that if Museveni is not there, would the army behave as it is behaving now? These are their fears."

They are fears I heard over and over again. At Makerere University, in Kampala, a group of law students I met with, all born in Amin's time, some of them orphans of the Luwero war, others ex-combatants, agreed that Uganda remains a "powder keg." Their Harvard-trained lecturer, Joe Oloka-Onyango, told me, "Museveni has been a boon and a bane, larger than life. No other person could have done what he has done. My problem is sustainability. The institutional basis for stability has not been created. If Museveni were to disappear, a lot that is positive would collapse. It's too close to a one-party system. It's a slippery slope. At some point diminishing returns are going to set in. Museveni must recognize the point at which it's time to let go."

Museveni scarcely blinked when I mentioned these doubts. "When we defeated the dictatorship," he said, "our first task was to put these pillars in place: to restore the police, to restore the rule of law, to restore the civil service, to restore the army, and to restore the judiciary." One can only hope that he succeeds in this task above all others. In my conversations with Museveni he repeatedly stressed what he called the "ignorance" of Uganda's "bad elements." This was part of his rationale for a broad amnesty. Speaking of Amin, Okello, and those under them, he said, "They were doing what they were doing because of ignorance. People cannot be punished for what they don't know very well. There are two priorities: The first is to remove the criminals from power. That one we have done. The second is to educate people about a modern ethos."

But there are "bad elements" everywhere; what's to stop them from taking over again? Uganda will have real peace only when its stability depends not on the character of its leaders but on the quality of the institutions those leaders are a part of. History will judge Yoweri Museveni not according to the measure of peace he has achieved while in power but on whether it survives after he steps down—assuming he keeps his word.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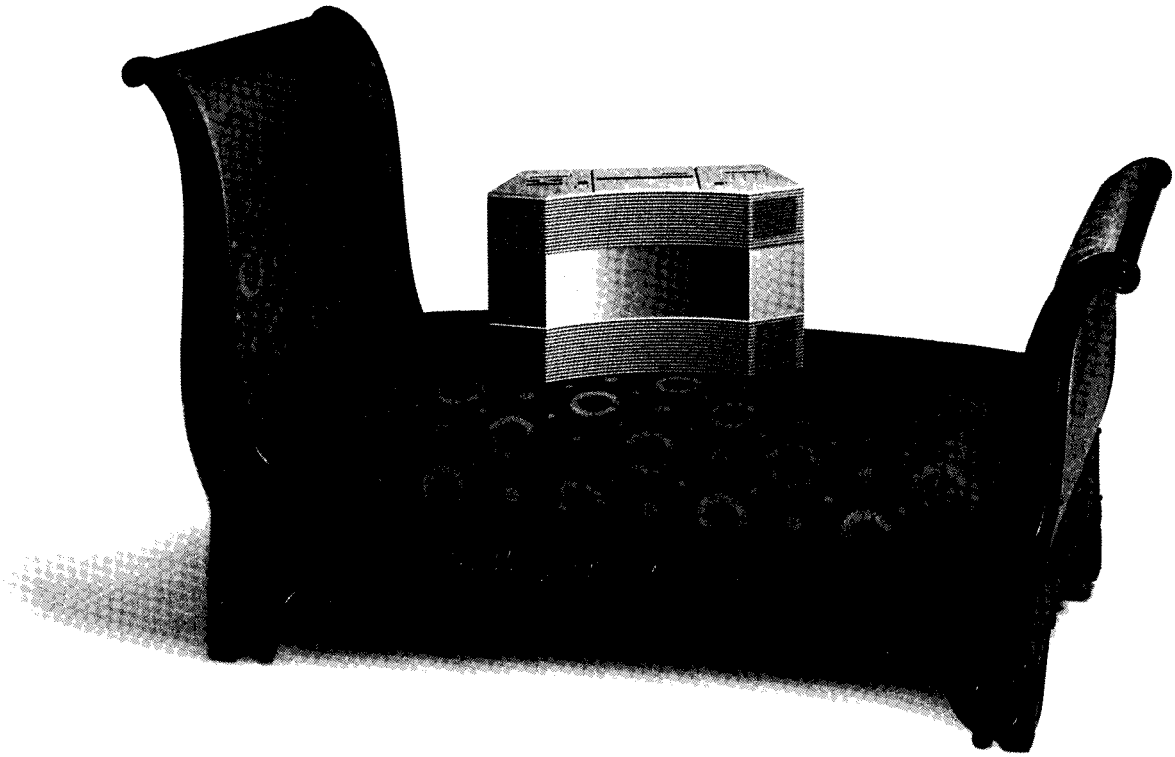

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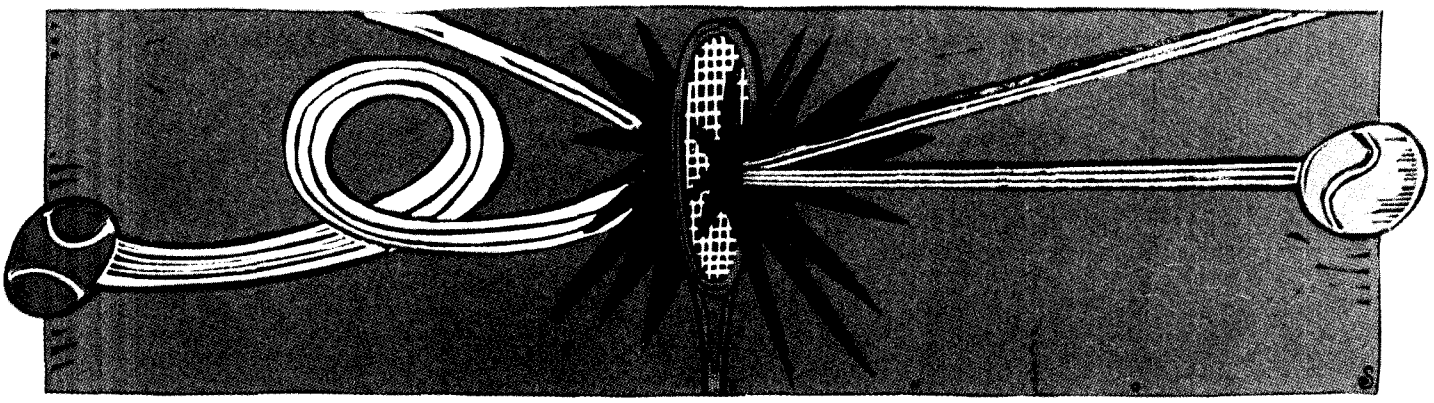

# Net Gains

*Vacations that will help you become a better tennis player*

**by James Fallows**

THE big problem with tennis is that it's hard to learn. The bratty personality of today's typical tennis star is also a problem, but the larger reason for the game's waning popularity is that many ordinary people have given up trying to play. Tennis takes more time and practice than other forms of exercise—swimming, biking, running, aerobics, even skiing—before a person is good enough to enjoy it. Although there are obvious exceptions, by their twenties most people are as good at tennis as they are going to be. This means that people who don't start early are at a disadvantage, and those who do start early often hit a plateau.

On the other hand, what a great game! You can play it all your life, once you learn to play at all, and you can get more exercise from it in an hour than you will in a week of golf. In a selfless investigative effort to determine whether I could break the tennis learnability barrier, I recently visited two prominent tennis-teaching centers: the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Bradenton, Florida, and the Vic Braden Tennis College in Coto de Caza, California (there are other branches of both schools). I enrolled at these campuses as a paying guest, not a reporter, and I judged them from the perspective of a typical "good bad player"—good enough to have played on a high school team, not good enough to have played in college. Further research will no doubt be necessary, but my preliminary findings give me hope.

The Bollettieri and Braden schools are perhaps the best known of several brand-name tennis camps across the country. Others in the same category are run by John Gardiner in California and Arizona, by John Newcombe in Texas, and by Harry Hopman in Florida. Hundreds of other camps, advertised in listings in each issue of *Tennis* magazine, are run in Sunbelt states and the Caribbean year-round and throughout the country in the summer. They have varying emphases: beginners' tennis, intensive training for serious juniors, a resortlike experience for more casual players. Some, like the Vic Braden camp, take a scientific and bio-mechanical approach to generating particular strokes, while others, including Bollettieri's, emphasize conditioning and extensive on-court drills.

Each of the camps I visited reflects the personality of its namesake. Braden and Bollettieri are both in their early sixties and came to prominence during the tennis boom of the 1970s. Vic Braden was often seen as a TV commentator in those years. He is chubby and nonathletic-looking, although he played in the fledgling pro-tennis tournaments of the 1950s. He has a relentlessly jokey manner, and before going to his "college" I had considered him a professional clown, like the TV weatherman Willard Scott. His school's slogan is "Laugh and Win."

I don't think I've ever seen a convincing picture of Nick Bollettieri smiling. During the big events of the tennis season, when one of Bollettieri's numerous protégés is on center court, the TV cameras often pick him out in the grandstands, watching the action impassively from behind his wraparound shades. Seeing Bollettieri's deeply tanned, leatherized skin and motionless head, I am reminded of a crafty and powerful reptile—a Komodo dragon, perhaps, poised until it strikes. No offense, Nick!

The Bollettieri establishment has the atmosphere of a big, hyperserious tennis factory; Braden's setup is more relaxed and resortlike. There are seventy-five courts at Bollettieri's academy, and about a dozen at Braden's. The lodgings at Bollettieri's are spartan and motel-like, whereas Braden's are nicely furnished vacation condos. The heart of Bollettieri's operation is its junior academy, where adolescents from around the world come to live for months or years and do tennis drills five to eight hours a day. Andre Agassi is one of many now-prominent players to have lived there as a youngster. A racket purporting to be the one with which Agassi won Wimbledon



Illustration by Randall Enos



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in 1992 hangs behind the registration desk.

The good and the bad of modern competition tennis are clearly evident at Bollettieri's youth academy. The players become amazingly precocious as athletes —Jim Courier and Monica Seles trained here before hitting the circuit in their early teens—but are pushed young into viewing every other student as an obstacle on the road to the Top Ten. Youngsters yell and pout as they miss balls, and the coaches yell at them like Marine Corps drill instructors. Some of this atmosphere spills over to the adult camp. Students at Braden's school are assigned to four-or-five-student coaching groups according to forms they fill out themselves, assessing their own skill. (The groups are rearranged if someone has been unrealistic in his self-appraisal.) At Bollettieri's all the students are mustered out early on the morning of the first day of camp and run through a classification drill. They take turns returning balls while coaches pace back and forth behind them, muttering and marking down judgments on their clipboards.

I am trying to convey the do-or-die atmosphere of the Bollettieri camp, not to criticize or make fun of it. It is high-powered, serious, and physically demanding. (And *hot!* Be sure to bring a hat and lots of high-test sun block.) I am usually not "leg-tired" after playing tennis; I was very tired, with sore legs, at the end of each of my three days at Bollettieri's. About fifty adults were registered for the session I joined. Most were there for three-day or week-long sessions, and many were there for the second or third time. ("Uh, you think three days will be enough?" one coach helpfully asked me during the classification drill.) About a quarter of the students came from outside the United States, mainly Europe and Latin America. Only two or three seemed to be beginners, and they were not enjoying themselves. After beady-eyed observation I concluded that I'd be able to beat about half the men, and would get beaten by the other half.

The Braden enrollment was smaller, more regional, and less skilled. About fifteen students were there for the weekend session I attended. All were from the United States, most were from the West Coast, several were beginners, and I'd have happily risked money on my chances against any of them in a match.

The great strength of the Bollettieri program is its drills. The day is broken into two on-court segments, from 8:30 to 11:30, and from 1:30 to 4:00. During those sessions each group of four or five students spends twenty to thirty minutes with one coach, working on a particular stroke or drill. Then the head coach blows a whistle, and the group moves to the next instructor and drill. Nearly all this time is spent actually hitting balls (or picking them up, the inescapable bane of tennis camps), in routines that are increasingly tiring and complicated. Just to keep up the Bollettieri spirit, morning and afternoon sessions often ended with a round of "king of the court," in which students in each group battled among themselves for supremacy.

The coaches who ran the sessions, all male and mainly in their twenties, were affable, competent, and generally good at explaining their points. (I caught sight of Bollettieri himself for about ten seconds one day, when he was en route between his parking space and his office.) The head coach announced early in the program that he wasn't going to suggest big changes in anyone's game. No major grip shifts, no radical alterations in well-established strokes. The idea was to make the most of what each player already knew how to do. Thus the emphasis on fitness, drills, and learning where to be and where to aim on the court.

I felt tuned up and toughened by my time at Bollettieri's camp, when I had gotten over feeling tired. But the most useful part of the session was not part of the normal curriculum. For an exorbitant-seeming extra fee of $60, one of the coaches videotaped me hitting various strokes for fifteen minutes—and then, for forty-five minutes, went through super-slow-motion replays of each stroke. Few of us in the cannon-fodder ranks have any idea of what we look like while hitting, and even if you've seen a normal video of yourself, slow-mo is extraordinarily revealing. Things I would never have believed—for instance, that both my feet left the ground by the time I hit each serve—became undeniable. Things I had heard for thirty years—about moving my feet this way and pointing my elbow that way—suddenly made sense. No wonder the pros are so good! They get to see themselves on slow-mo all the time.

THIS brings us back to Vic Braden, because what Bollettieri offers as an add-on is the essence of Braden's approach. Braden's specialty has long been a scientific, or at least engineering-oriented, analysis of sports performance. The slow-mo camera is his basic tool, along with computer models of how people's arms, legs, and torsos should move if they are to run, throw, or hit as well as they can. The first half hour of a Braden course involves watching a video about these computerized techniques. Because I was still prideful about having endured the Bollettieri camp several weeks earlier, I initially thought that Braden's program might be too laid-back and theoretical to be of any use. I changed my mind.

Braden's approach to tennis has two main payoffs. One is that it illustrates why some techniques work better than others in tennis. For instance, every player has heard that it's a bad idea to throw a service toss too high. Braden's slow-mo cameras make this lesson unforgettably clear. If the toss goes only as high as it needs to for the serve, the ball remains in a hittable zone *twenty to forty-five times* as long as if it goes way up and then is accelerating on its way down as you try to hit it.

The other great benefit of Braden's approach is to open up holes in the learnability barrier. By offering a rationale for a certain style of swing, and by showing with his videos exactly how the swing is generated, Braden makes it possible for beginners to learn fast—and for experienced players to change parts of their game they had resigned themselves to. The serve is generally the hardest motion for beginners to learn. I watched Braden spend twenty minutes with a woman who was terrified of the serve. At the end of that period—a blink of the eye, in tennis-learning terms—he had taught her the basic motion. Braden and his sub-coaches suggested a significant change in the way I hit the forehand, for thirty years my favorite shot. I would normally have been afraid to tamper with my only reliable basic stroke, but by explaining the physics of various swings, and taking me through the new swing on slow-mo videotape, they had me willing at least to try it. I've begun incorporating it into my game.

The day at Braden's camp is broken into morning and afternoon on-court ses-



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sions, and groups of four or five students practice together, as at Bollettieri's. There are fewer rigorous drills (and no games of "king of the court"), but students are videotaped several times a day and shown slow-mo replays on the spot. The coaches are similar in background and affability to those at Bollettieri's.

Braden is a highly visible presence at his camp—or at least he was during my visit. On the second of my two days there it rained for hours and we could not go onto the courts at all. Braden immediately offered to refund half the cost of the weekend, or let students come back for another weekend free, and then spent several hours sitting around with students talking in detail about their strokes. Braden has the air of a natural teacher and an evangelist. At Bollettieri's camp, where cultivating young prodigies is the main goal, I thought I detected a whiff of contempt for adult plodders like me. Braden actually seemed to be excited to encounter beginners, since there was more room for him to help them improve. These few hours with him were worth the cost of the entire weekend. I didn't tell the course registrar that—I said I'd use my rain check to come back for another weekend.

Have I gotten better? Not really, not yet. But for the first time in many years I have a sense of how I could get better, if I concentrated and took the time. If you'd like the same inkling of hope, here are the details:

The Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy is five miles from the Sarasota-Bradenton airport. It offers adult courses year-round. The "week-long" program, which runs from Sunday evening until Saturday at noon, costs about $1,100 per person with room and board included, and about $800 for tennis instruction only. Prices are slightly lower in the summer. The telephone number is 800-USA-NICK.

The Vic Braden Tennis College offers two-, three-, and five-day courses during most of the year. The cost for instruction and lodging is about $150 a day double occupancy, and $190 single occupancy. Braden also sells his videotapes and his influential book, *Tennis for the Future*, by mail. The phone number is 800-42-COURT outside California, and 800-CALL-VIC inside the state. Coto de Caza is half an hour by car from the John Wayne Airport, in Orange County, and an hour and a half from the Los Angeles or San Diego airport. See you there.


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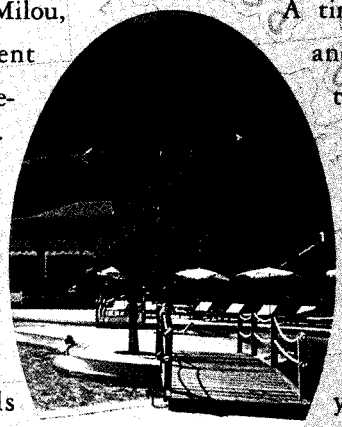

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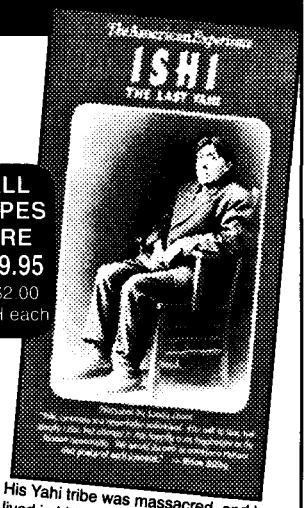


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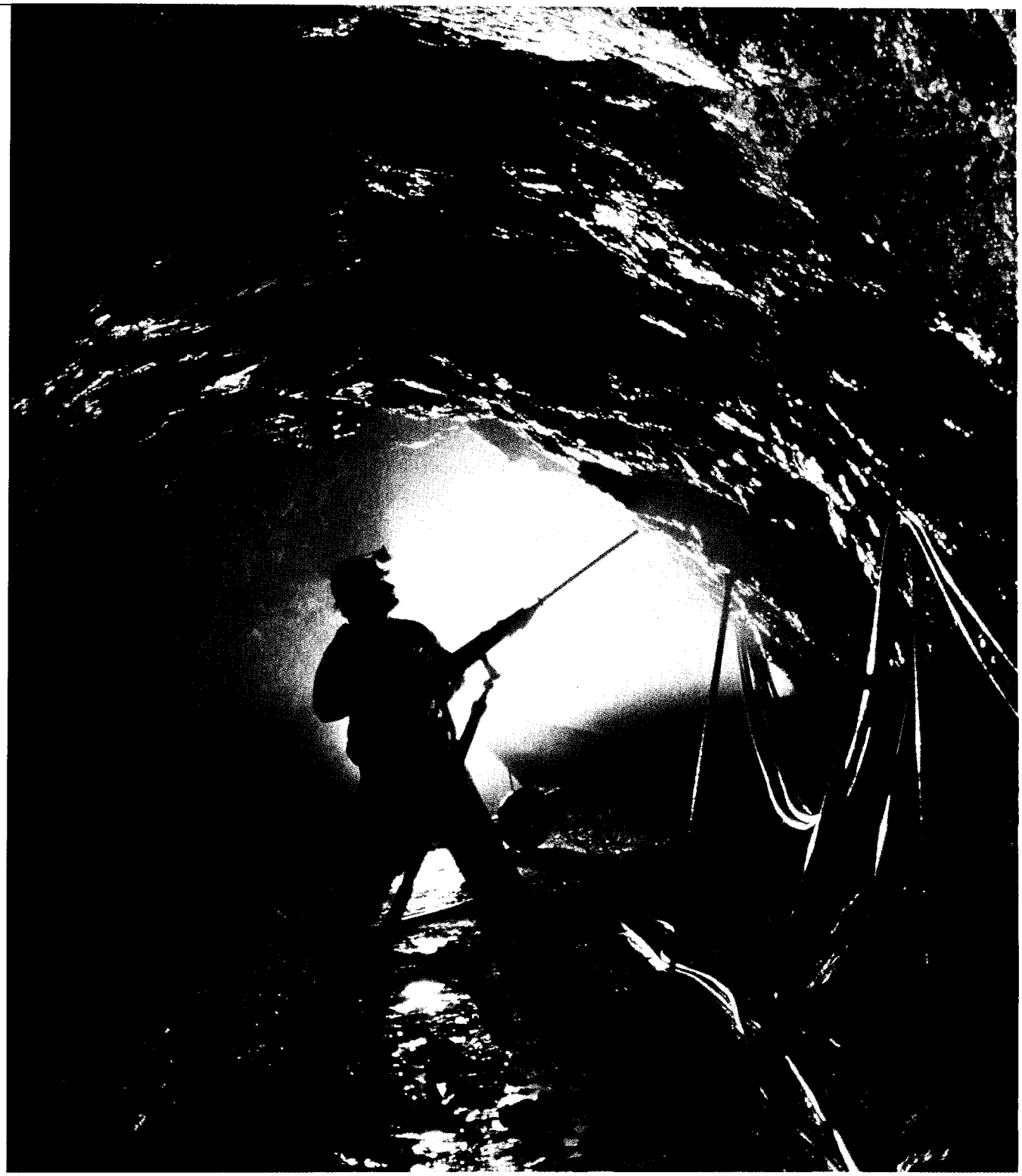

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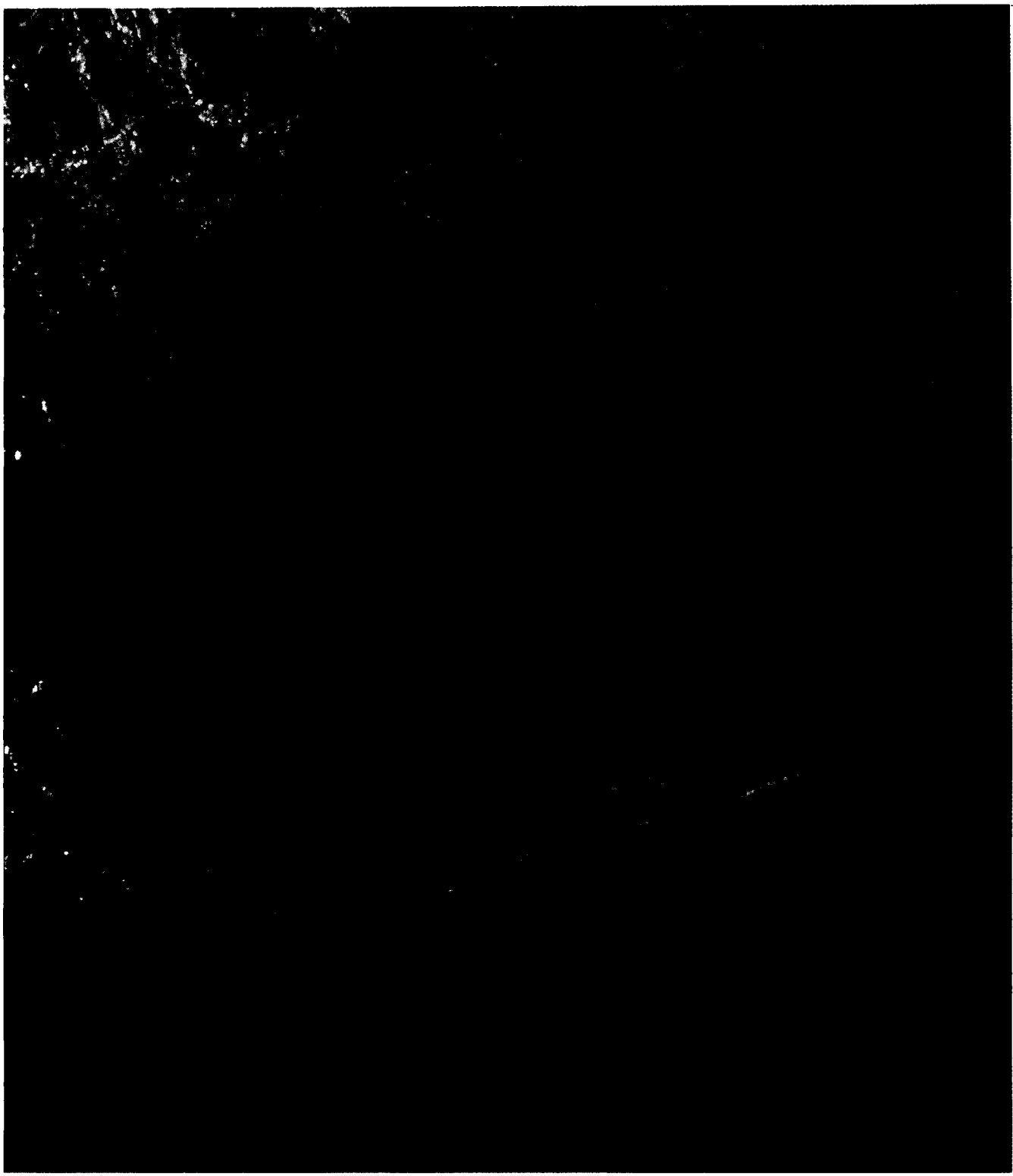

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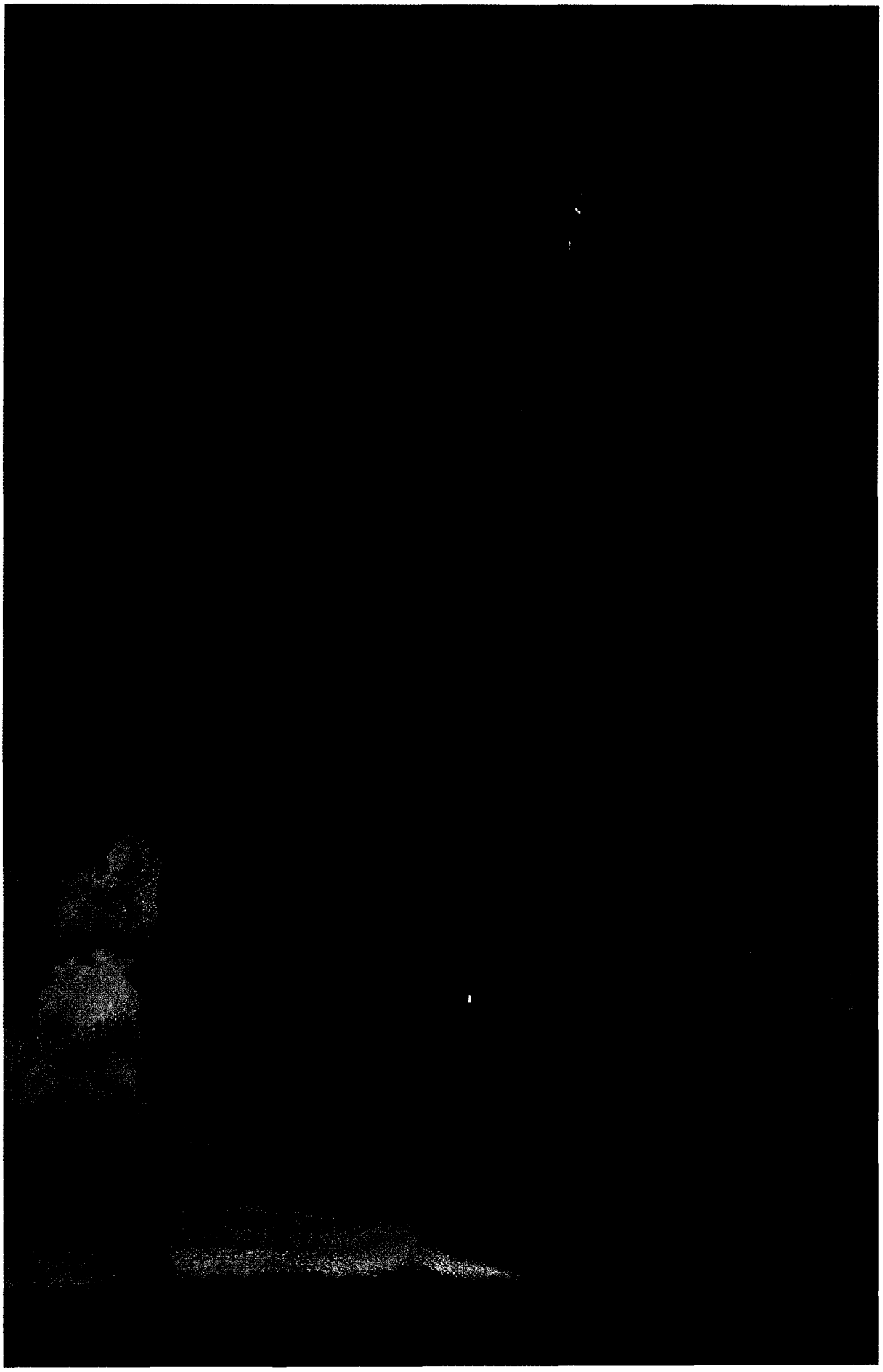

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# How We Become What We Are

by WINIFRED GALLAGHER

*Many aspects of our personalities, it now seems clear, are inborn and resistant to change—a fact, ironically, that makes the role of environment in our lives all the more important*

AN offspring of Cry Havoc and One Tough Cookie, Slick Willy is the second bull terrier fortunate enough to belong to David Lykken, a psychologist interested in temperament. Temperament, which is reflected in a creature's *manner* of behavior, is personality's biological, enduring, and heritable aspect. It greatly contributes to but does not entirely explain personality, much as innate intelligence contributes to but cannot entirely explain ability. Willy's temperament originated when the English bulldog was deliberately crossed with the white English terrier, almost 200 years ago. The nature of the resulting fearless, tenacious fighting machine requires a different sort of nurture than that of dogs bred for complaisance. When Willy can't resist chomping through a plastic jug with his powerful jaws or taking a few extra laps before responding to a summons, Lykken mostly just grumbles, reserving sterner measures for more serious infractions. Harsh treatment would render the feisty animal vicious; permissiveness or neglect would produce an uncontrollable bully. Willy's good behavior depends on an appre-



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ciation of his innate disposition and a judicious balance of carrot and stick.

In a postindustrial culture that holds up a workaholic Mr. Nice Guy as its temperamental ideal, the heroic spirit defined by Alexander the Great has fallen from grace. Time and technology have shrunk the number of acceptable outlets for the daring, aggressive nature that swung the sword and mapped the unknown, until it has come to be associated primarily with criminals. This saddens but doesn't surprise Lykken, a professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota; his work, some of it conducted with subjects behind bars, convinces him that "the psychopath and the hero are twigs of the same branch."

The history of another bull-terrier owner, Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton, the legendary nineteenth-century explorer, spy, scholar, and soldier, brings Lykken's observation to life. By the age of nine, the boy who would be the first white man in many parts of Africa and Asia, and who would translate the *Kama Sutra*, was, according to his biographer Edward Rice, "virtually a hard-core delinquent," more or less ignored by his parents and known for fighting, shooting at tombstones and church windows, lewdness—and enduring toothache. A prodigy who spoke twenty-nine languages, Burton preferred the army to Oxford. His temperament is summed up by his rationale for visiting the forbidden Muslim city of Harar: no European had successfully entered the city, so visiting it was "therefore a point of honor with me." Had he been born in the gutter rather than in a milieu that provided suitable channels for his aggressiveness, "Ruffian Dick" might have followed his proclivities to the gallows rather than to knighthood. The superficially odd similarity between guys in white hats and guys in black ones, vividly portrayed in Clint Eastwood's recent film *Unforgiven*, illustrates Freud's observation that although a particular instinct always has the same aim, it may have different objects. What worries Lykken is not the inclination to prevail but how it is directed.

As America reels from a wave of lawlessness, research on the temperamental underpinnings of violence has become increasingly controversial. Because black men compose only six percent of the general population but about half of the imprisoned one, the issue particularly concerns the black community, which is understandably suspicious of biological explanations for behavior. In 1992 a firestorm of protest caused Frederick Goodwin, a psychiatrist and the director of the federal Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration, and the world's authority on manic depression, to resign his job and return to his previous position as director of the National Institute of Mental Health after he drew a parallel between inner-city violence and primate studies showing that young males in the wild were more violent and more sexually active when they had to compete for scarce resources. Black political leaders and others also successfully lobbied the National Institutes of Health to withhold money for a conference, to be held that year at the University of Maryland, on possible genetic components of violent behavior.

Despite the apprehension that research on violence could stigmatize individuals or groups, what it actually shows is that, particularly where natures like Slick Willy's and Richard Burton's are concerned, nurture is the best predictor of good or bad behavior. The demise of the nineteenth-century bourgeois conscience makes no difference to some types of people, but it makes a big one to others. Mostly because of a large increase in illegitimacy since 1970, Lykken says, "across the land, but mainly in the inner cities, thousands of children aren't being brought up by, but only domiciled with, parents who are indifferent, incompetent, or unsocialized themselves." He continues, "We're running a crime factory that turns out little sociopaths." One reason why this white academic chooses to speak out on a socially sensitive issue becomes clear when he gestures toward photographs of two particularly robust babies displayed in his office. "My grandsons are going to be big African-American males, so they're going to face a high risk of attracting violence themselves and of frightening other people. Because of them, and the fact that crime is threatening to destroy all the great improvements in race relations that have come about in my lifetime, I get kind of steamed up about this problem." He concedes that "there's not a prayer in the world" that the solution he favors—the licensing of people for biological parenthood according to the same criteria that are used for adoption—will be tested in the near future: "My purpose in making an extravagant suggestion is to start a discussion. The problem is so real, and nobody is talking about the solution."

## Predestination?

As personal rights and freedoms have expanded during this century, there has been less and less talk about temperament. Throughout most of history, however, people have been regarded less as unique individuals than as variations on a few basic human types. In the fifth century B.C. Hippocrates described four temperaments, which he considered to be linked to various predominant bodily fluids, or humors: the sanguine temperament is optimistic and energetic, the melancholic is moody and withdrawn, the choleric is irritable and impulsive, and the phlegmatic is calm and slow. However quaint this theory may seem, Hippocrates anticipated modern linkages of biochemistry with behavior and astutely described types of people as familiar today as they were in antiquity.

By the 1940s two powerful ideologies diverted scientists' age-old interest in the biological dimensions of personality. First, Freud asserted the overwhelming importance of personal history in determining what his followers called character. Second, revulsion at Nazism's proclamation of inferior and superior genetic types converged with the spread of


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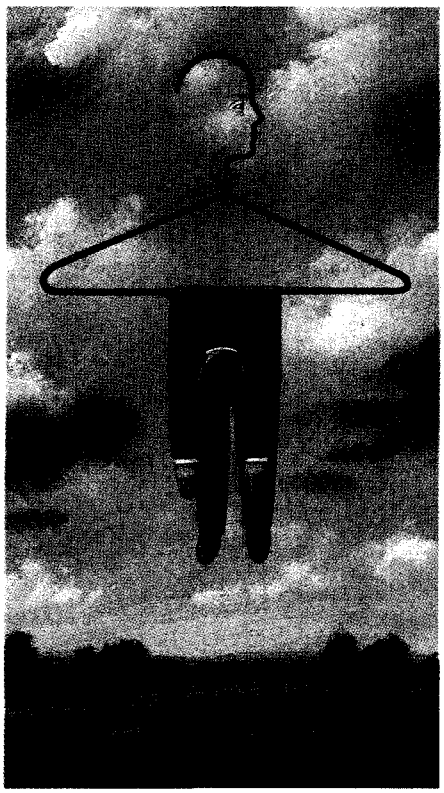
democratic ideas to focus academe on racial equality and the formative power of environment. Among the few scientists to express interest in temperament was I. P. Pavlov, the dark prince of conditioning, who observed of his dogs that "the final nervous activity present in the animal is an alloy of the features peculiar to the type and of the changes wrought by the environment." "Excitatory," choleric dogs, like Slick Willy, were by nature "pugnacious, passionate, and easily and quickly irritated," while the "inhibitory," or melancholic, animal "believes in nothing, hopes for nothing, in everything he sees the dark side." Of the two stabler sorts that Pavlov observed, one was "self-contained and quiet; persistent and steadfast," and the other "energetic and very productive" but easily bored. Such insights, however, were dwarfed by mountains of literature on what our mothers did to us.



Over the past decade modern genetics has made research into temperament intellectually acceptable again, though it is not well loved in some circles, where it is regarded as a right-wing theory of predestination. Even those who study temperament can be defensive or vaguely apologetic about their findings. Lykken rolls his eyes over his reputation as a "biological fascist." Jerome Kagan, a Harvard developmental psychologist pre-eminent among temperament researchers, and the author of the recently published *Galen's Prophecy: Temperament in Human Nature*, observes, "Because of my training, politics, and values, in my work I once muted the power of biology and maximized the environment's." Twenty years ago, when he observed a shy toddler, Kagan saw a child influenced by unpleasant social experience; today he sees one who has a certain type of neurochemistry. "I have been dragged, kicking and screaming, by my data to acknowledge that temperament is more powerful than I thought and wish to believe," he says. "That's where I am, not out of prejudice but out of realism."

**Research into temperament is intellectually acceptable again, though not well loved in some circles, where it is regarded as a right-wing theory of predestination.**

### Fear, Aggression, Boldness

LIKE the ghost in the machine or the mind in the brain, temperament is best glimpsed in action. To discern it, watch a person communicate, says Hagop Akiskal, the senior science adviser on affective and related disorders at the National Institute of Mental Health: "It's not just a matter of personality but something more basic that has to do with rhythm, reactivity, *emotion*." Of all species, *Homo sapiens* has the most feelings. Just as drives such as hunger and sleep are more flexible than reflexes like the eye blink and the knee jerk, emotions, which are physiological as well as psychological events, give us more behavioral options than do drives. Some emotions are so basic and universal that the psychologist Hans Eysenck, a pioneer of the modern biological study of personality, who conducts research in London at the Institute of Psychiatry, believes that they're nothing less than the lowest common denominators of human experience. "We've done our studies in thirty-six countries," he says, "and everywhere we find the same three ways in which behavior can differ." To varying degrees all people express fear, which helps us avoid danger; aggression, which enables us to fight it; and extraversion, or sociability, which enables us to face it with equanimity. Fundamentally, our temperaments are distinguished by the traits of anxiety, irritability, and élan.

That our natures are organized around our habitual reactions to threat has given Philip Gold, a research psychiatrist who is the chief of the neuroendocrinology branch of the NIMH, a "tragic view of the human condition." Physical or emotional, real or perceived, danger lurks everywhere, and from an evolutionary perspective our species' great asset and, sometimes, liability is an extremely sensitive emotional and physiological arousal system that detects and reacts to it. This is the stress, or "fight or flight," response. The stable sorts of people whom modern researchers describe as uninhibited, bold, or relaxed can cope with life's vicissitudes—from a snake in the jungle to a fire-breathing boss—in a manner Gold describes as "philosophical," because their stress response isn't triggered by every little thing and doesn't stay on red alert longer than necessary. These resilient people are innately disposed, Gold says, "to celebrate the beauty of exis-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tence and the wonders of an interior life and external connections despite being surrounded by unanswerable questions, ambiguous dilemmas, and the certainty of loss and death."

Those who naturally react to the threatening or the merely unfamiliar with an excess of either the flight or the fight response are in for more trouble. Because their stress response spikes frequently and ebbs slowly, Hippocrates' melancholics, whom scientists now describe as anxious, inhibited, or reactive, are so worn down that they are apt to behave in what Gold calls a depressive way: "Faced with a setback, for example, they say it occurred because they're worthless." To protect themselves, the flight-prone often cultivate an avoidant way of life that worsens their plight. "They're likelier to survive in truly threatening situations," Gold says, "but they have less comfortable lives." Hippocrates' cholerics, like Willy and Burton, respond to stress by going into fight mode. To these people, whom researchers variously call aggressive, impulsive, or irritable, the dark possibility of pain and defeat is so intense, Gold says, "that they can't bear to be accountable for it in a depressive way." Instead they blame it on others, and strike out. Although the bias toward one of these fundamental emotional tones, or temperaments, "has to do with what a person has learned he has to be in order to be loved," Gold says, "it also has to do with genetic factors that biologically predispose him to respond in a certain way to the paradigmatic human situations of pleasure and opportunity, danger and loss." He continues, "In the blood-and-guts world of challenges, these differences in the stress response account for the fundamental parameters of what people are like."

Although some people are so colored by a single emotional tone that they're said to be the inhibited, uninhibited, or aggressive type, most temperaments aren't primary yellow, blue, or red. Their many subtle shades include greens, oranges, and violets blended from lots of different genetic proclivities. Kagan predicts that future research will define many more dispositions and traits, or temperamental characteristics, each with its own physiological substrates; a likely example is a familiar permutation of the reactive temperament known as the obsessive type. What most people consider occasional thoughts or pursuits rivet the neural arousal system of the genius, the collector, and the artist, who vent their obsessions in compulsive activity. Reflecting on Benny Goodman's notorious social insensitivity, a wise musician from his band observed that the celebrated clarinetist, who practiced his instrument eight hours a day, thought not about people but about fingering.

Although scientists disagree about the ultimate number of traits and the temperaments they color, most of the research concerns the three most obvious qualities: fearfulness, boldness, and aggressiveness. Just as the scars that laced Burton's body speak of the way aggressive people operate in the world, the lives of two of his eminent Victorian contemporaries say something about the approaches of the inhibited and uninhibited temperaments. The Queen whose name is synonymous with the effort to dampen arousal described the clockwork progress of an ideal day in the company of her beloved husband: "We walked in the garden. . . . At twelve o'clock we had prayers in the drawing-room, which were read by a young clergyman, who preached a good sermon. . . . I read to Albert the first three cantos of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which delighted us both; and then we looked over some curious, fine old prints by Ridinger." Yet even Victoria had days when novelty intruded on her careful plans, trying her sensitive nerves. Despite the efforts of maids and courtiers in a posh Highlands lodge, some missing luggage caused her a rougher night than Burton would have passed in a pestilent swamp: "I disliked the idea of going to bed without any of the necessary toilette," she wrote in her diary. "However, some arrangements were made which were very uncomfortable; and after two I got into bed, but had very little sleep at first; finally, fatigue got the better of discomfort, and after three I fell asleep."

The nocturnal arrangements of Victoria's subject the Honorable Jane Digby El Mezrab, who also doted on her husband—at least, on her fourth one—would have greatly perturbed Victoria. With Sheikh Medjuel El Mezrab, this well-traveled, much-married lady passed half each year in a Bedouin tent in the Syrian desert. Arab robes flying and blue eyes rimmed with kohl, she raced camels and horses, went falconing, and even accompanied her lord and master into battle; in quieter moments she served him at meals and washed his feet. After more than a decade of this flared-nostril life, taken up well past the point at which Victoria had abandoned herself to inconsolable widowhood, Jane wrote, "Sixty-two years of age, and an impetuous romantic girl of seventeen cannot exceed me in ardent passionate feelings." Like her Queen, Jane focused on her domestic life, but *how* she did so throbs with the uninhibited temperament.

## "Nature-Nurture" Experiments

As Hippocrates intuited, such contrasting dispositions reflect very different chemistries. Scientists are just beginning to develop the technology that allows them to eavesdrop on the whisperings of neurotransmitters, the brain's chemical agents of communication, and learn how these are translated into modulations of behavior. For the most part, the links between particular traits and transmitter levels remain tentative, partly because the former can involve neurochemical choruses, not just solos. So far, the principle that who we are involves our biological as well as our social heritage rests mostly on two types of research. At the University of Minnesota's Center for Twin and Adoption Research and elsewhere, scientists have established certain traits as genetically rooted by comparing the characteristics of pairs of identical and fraternal twins who have been reared together or adopted separately in infancy and raised apart; the relatively few observed differences in the identicals' personali-


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ties must be caused by environment. In longitudinal studies Kagan and others monitor developmental changes in their subjects from infancy in order to search for the biopsychological consistencies that suggest temperamental origins.

Some of the most important, if indirect, insights into human temperament come from classical nature-nurture experiments in which generations of animals are selectively bred for particular traits and then closely monitored in different settings. The research psychologists Stephen Suomi, of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, and J. D. Higley, of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, have produced strains of rhesus monkeys that are variously inhibited, uninhibited, or aggressive, and have then tracked their neurobiology through their neurotransmitters' metabolites, or end products, in cerebrospinal fluid. "When you observe groups of primates, they look a lot alike initially," Higley says. "Within a few minutes, though, you identify the solitary, inhibited one, who peeks at you around a corner, and the bold one, who leaves the group and approaches in hopes of a treat. Our monkeys show big differences in these traits, which tend to be the most enduring ones in humans as well."

Like hot and cold or hard and soft, inhibited and uninhibited seem to be extremes on a single spectrum, and scientists who study one trait also study the other. Anxious monkeys have high levels of norepinephrine; bold monkeys have low levels of the same transmitter. It makes sense that the inhibited have lots of something the uninhibited have little of, but that may be too simplistic an etiology for boldness. Suomi and Kagan maintain that uninhibitedness includes but is more than not being anxious, especially at its extreme, and that the other ingredients in its formula have thus far eluded detection. Although the inhibited and the uninhibited, which account for about 10 and 20 percent of the primate population respectively, can be arranged on a continuum of stress responsivity and norepinephrine level, Kagan says that the exercise and its implications are a bit like "putting Mozart on a spectrum with your daughter who's taking piano lessons. He's just better in music?"

Because he works with human babies and children rather than monkeys, Kagan can't examine temperamental neurology as directly as Suomi can. He infers something of how his subjects' nervous systems operate, however, by periodically measuring their behavioral and physiological responses, such as heart rate and blood pressure, to mild stressors such as noise, sour tastes, unfamiliar objects and people, even a mother's frown. Regarding infancy, he has proved what every parent knows: each baby is born with a characteristic mood and style of responding. By the second and third years of life, he has found, some clearly express one of two great temperamental extremes.

About 15 percent of youngsters are plainly inhibited. They differ physiologically from other children in many ways, from their greater incidence of allergies and constipation to their higher heart rates and levels of cortisol, a stress-related hormone. They tend to have blue eyes and narrow faces, and slightly more of them are girls. Psychologically, they're constrained and fretful, and have unusual fears—fears, say, of kidnapping rather than of monsters. The stimuli that swamp their sensitive nerves barely stir those of another group of children. Most of the 30 percent of uninhibited youngsters are boys, and boys account disproportionately for the very boldest. Their physiological hallmark is their very low heart rate; their behavior is marked by energy and spontaneity. To these emerging portraits Nathan Fox, a professor of psychology at the University of Maryland, adds that very anxious and bold children have stable patterns of right-brain and left-brain activity, as measured by electroencephalograms. Either type of EEG, he says, is "a very good fingerprint of a particular temperament."

Evidence from twin studies and his subjects' family histories has convinced Kagan that the inhibited and uninhibited natures begin with genes. Yet, at least at the individual level, nature's contribution cannot be quantified; too many parts of the equation, such as epistasis, or the process whereby one gene suppresses the expression of another, elude measurement. When scientists compare personalities within a group, their guesstimates of how much of the variation among individuals is due to biology and how much to learning generally range from 20 percent and 80 percent respectively to 50–50, as the Minnesota team believes. One study has suggested that 40 percent of the difference in inhibition among a group of middle-class children depended on genes, but, Kagan says, "to ask what proportion of personality is genetic rather than environmental is like asking what proportion of a blizzard is due to cold temperature rather than humidity." What the distinctive genetic heritages of anxious and bold children bring about, however, are neurochemical differences in the functioning of the amygdala—a brain structure that assigns emotion to experience—and its connections. Thus the same loud noise that scares an inhibited child will intrigue an uninhibited one. As Fox says, "Some children are by and large, across many situations, very fearful, while others, no matter what you throw at them, are happy-go-lucky and approach the world with gusto."

## Finding an Adaptive Niche

THE sensitivity of the inhibited nature to things not only threatening but also merely novel makes life an uphill affair. At least one inhibited person is known to have projected this aversion to the unfamiliar into the afterlife. For the public celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, a statue of one of her predecessors, Queen Anne, was scheduled to be moved from its accustomed position. "Most certainly not!" said Her Majesty. "Why, it might some day be suggested that *my* statue should be moved, which I should much dislike." Some of the inhibited have an easier


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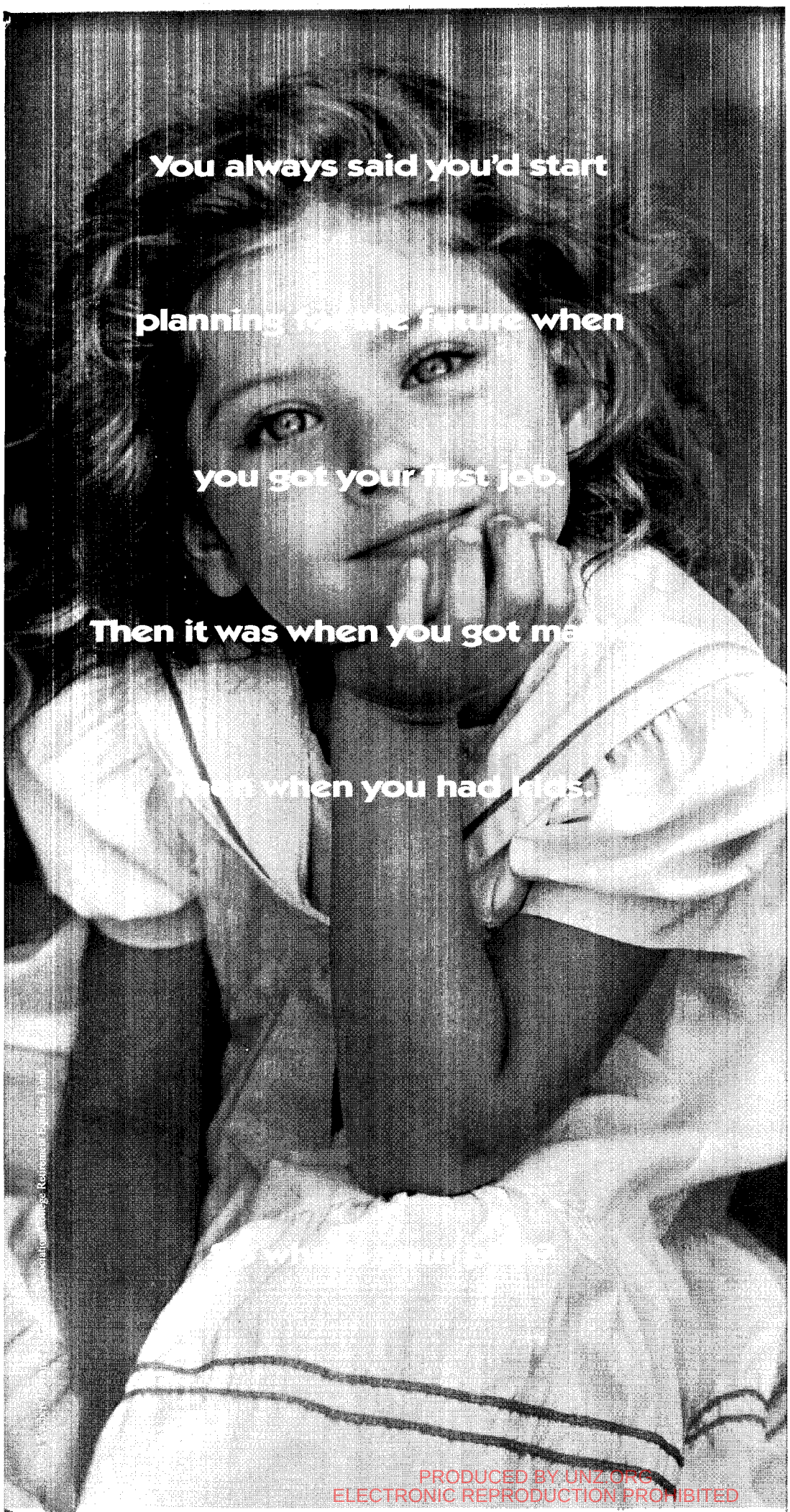


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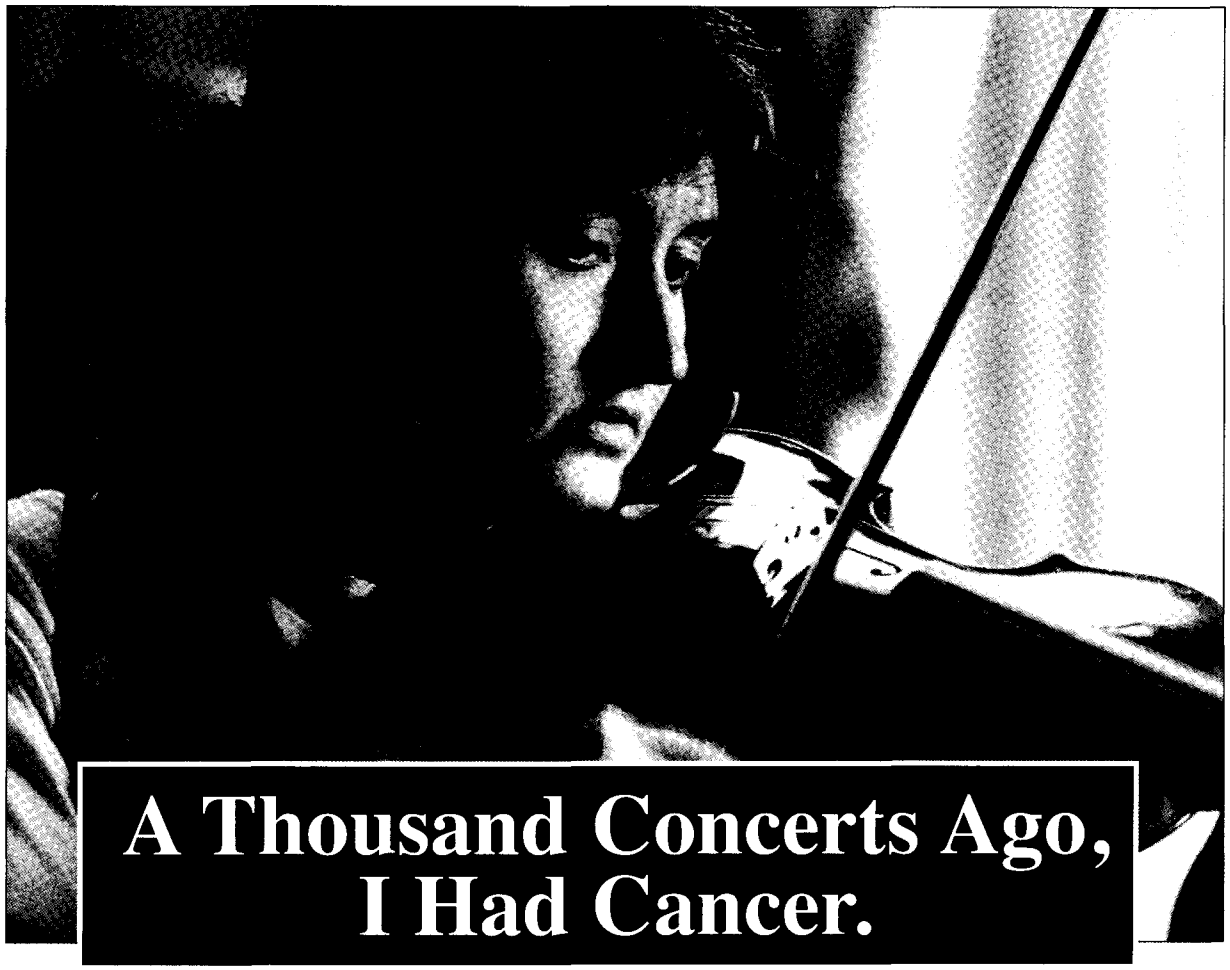

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time than others, however, because they're not socially constrained, or shy. Although inhibition is linked to norepinephrine, what Higley calls the "nerdiness" of the loner who can't get along goes with low levels of the transmitter serotonin. A person could have a high level of norepinephrine, and so be nervous, yet also have a high level of serotonin, and thus be sociable. The garrulous worrywart that Higley evokes is a familiar character—think of Victoria or Miles Silverberg on *Murphy Brown*. Medical literature shows, Higley says, that the capacity of such people to reach out, which many anxious people don't have, helps them counter the effects of stress. He says, "If you're wired to elicit and respond to social stimuli, you may get a lot of support that helps get you through that rotten, worried feeling inside."

To the many parents in the trenches concerned about their offspring's shyness, brashness, or other untoward tendencies, Kagan offers a few pragmatic insights. First, he says, children are born with different temperaments, so new mothers and fathers shouldn't assume that they're mishandling a baby who's neither pleased nor pleasing. Second, a child's disposition is malleable: "Parents shouldn't say, 'God gave me this type of kid—that's it!' They should acknowledge that some things are harder for the child to control, but should assume he can still exert *some* control." Finally, Kagan says, "remember that in a complex society like ours, each temperamental type can find its adaptive niche."

Few would wish to be the anxious type, but in an environment filled with predators, or their modern equivalents, having some worriers around is adaptive, at least for the species; that's why they remain in the gene pool. Hans Eysenck, a famously iconoclastic Freud-basher who has scored a zero on his own test of inhibition, says that his wife accuses him of not being afraid enough. "She is exceedingly careful, driving defensively and letting others get ahead. From the point of view of survival, her style is much better."

Again, another name for the anxious or inhibited temperament is "reactive." Among various good things associated with such a quiet, reflective nature, the foremost is intellectual achievement. Inhibited seven-year-olds excel at what Nathan Fox calls "executive functioning"; when they're asked how kids who have only one toy should share it, they offer a strategy such as "Alphabetize their last names, and let the person closest to *A* go first." Putting theory into practice is hard for them, however, because their sensitive natures and elaborate schemes are unsuited to the heterogeneous rigors of the school yard. Most do not end up with social or psychological problems, and the more fortunate find niches where they can operate successfully, becoming scientists, say, or poets.

A party animal doesn't dash off a *Paradise Lost*. The same high-strung families much afflicted by moodiness and depression are more likely than others to include writers and dancers, painters and composers. Happily, this strain is hypersensitive not only to stress and danger but also to art and nuance: as Byron wrote, "Of its own beauty is the mind diseased." Hagop Akiskal, after investigating (in collaboration with his wife Kareen Akiskal) what he calls "the romantic idea that mental illness is related to creativity," discovered a link not with disease per se but with a variation on the reactive disposition which he calls the "cyclothymic temperament." People of this type alternate rapidly between high and low levels of mood and activity which are far less marked than those of manic depressives. The "down" spells foster contemplation and reflection; during the "up" spells surging energy, ambition, confidence, and mental puissance drive hard work.

Unlike those burdened with an inhibited nature, the uninhibited have few complaints. Stress that breaks more sensitive spirits merely stimulates theirs. For example, one in five fighter pilots will at some point have to eject from his plane, and one in twelve will die in the line of duty exclusive of combat, yet the most elite fliers zealously compete for this hair-raising job. David Lykken has an insight into why daredevils not only cope with but thrive on what most people consider appalling risks. When he tested a group of prison inmates, he found that the boldest didn't readily learn how to escape an avoidable electric shock; they felt it, all right, but they didn't fear it.

The adaptive potential of steel nerves is summed up by a line of dialogue that frequently figures in action-adventure movies: "It's a tough job, but someone's got to do it." Ulysses S. Grant "was not excited by [danger], but was simply indifferent to it, was calm when others were aroused," according to his military secretary. "I have often seen him sit erect in his saddle when everyone else instinctively shrank as a shell burst in the neighborhood." A Union soldier put it thus: "Ulysses don't scare worth a damn." The uninhibited can manifest this same sangfroid in situations, from boardroom conferences to political debates, that entail social rather than physical risk. Grant was equally unperturbed by "the greatest moral emergencies," his aide wrote. "At the surrender of Lee, he was as impassive as on the most ordinary occasion." The insensitivity that is the dark side of boldness can squelch intimate relations. This wasn't so in the case of Grant—the general was devoted to Mrs. Grant and she to him. Among fighter pilots, however, nine out of ten separations and divorces are initiated by wives.

Having a nervous system that reads "threat" as "thrill" means you might die young, but you'll have fun. It has been said that Jane Digby, a famous equestrian, met a dashing sheikh (who may or may not have been Medjuel) while trying to buy a supposedly untamable horse from him. After she broke it, the Bedouin said his price could not be paid in coin. Jane agreed to be his if he would put away his other wives; should the arrangement turn out to be satisfactory, she said, it could be renewed in three years. Lykken recalls a trapper and bush pilot from northern Minnesota "who had adventures that made my jaw drop," he says. "He didn't brag, but just talked about these things he did that were so *interesting*, like going to a bear den and pulling out the cubs."


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## The Fighting Spirit

NEITHER Queen Victorias nor Jane Digbys, most people have the middling levels of inhibition that best ensure survival. "That's how biology works," J. D. Higley says. "Not too many temperaments are extreme." The one that seems most extreme is the disposition Hippocrates called choleric and his modern successors call irritable. To Higley, "if inhibition and boldness are the north and south of temperament, equanimity and irritability are the east and west." Although the irritable temperament is the hardest to define, Akiskal says, it's the easiest to see. We in fact pay to see it whenever we watch a movie actor who specializes in portraying restless characters who "express intense, unmodulated emotion that, seemingly out of nowhere, comes on like an avalanche, stirring everyone," Akiskal says. "That's what temperament does, and the irritable one does it most intensely." He deplores the prissy tendency to look askance at the hot-blooded temperament: "Civilized Western behavior assumes its relative absence, but its impact is very useful in some circumstances—say, in getting a point across quickly. Many people can't express such vivid feelings because they just don't *have* them—they lack the color that the intense supply." Although this disposition is potentially the most pathological, it's the least studied, Akiskal says, partly because "it evokes a lot of negative feelings in people."

Some of those negative feelings spring from the fact that although irritability—the tendency to be easily annoyed—is not the same as aggressiveness, the two are far from incompatible. As Richmond Lattimore observed, the tragedy of Achilles, the supreme warrior, was that his will was "disturbed by anger." Sir Richard Burton shared the hero's psychic heel: at one point in his youth he had no fewer than thirty-two affairs of honor pending violent settlement. Throughout history mankind has deliberately bred the fighting spirit. Slick Willy and the bulls of the *corrida* are obvious examples of an effort perhaps not limited to animals. From the time of Atreus and his son Agamemnon the aristocracy has traditionally taken more pride in its warriors than in its scholars. In Shakespeare's *Henry V* the French King Charles VI cautions his overconfident nobles that despite the erstwhile Prince Hal's reputation as a wastrel, the young invader "is bred out of that bloody strain / That haunted us in our familiar paths. /. . . This is a stem / Of that victorious stock; and let us fear / The native mightiness and fate of him."

Having bred a strain of aggressive rhesus monkeys, Higley finds that their defining characteristic is in early life irritability, and in later life the unsociability that correlates with the low level of serotonin they've inherited. Although it shows the stability of a temperamental characteristic, appearing early in development and staying late, aggressiveness seems less a single trait than an explosive combination of several. Thus the monkeys who acquire the most wounds over a lifetime—a pragmatic gauge of a belligerent nature—are quick-tempered loners who both attract and instigate attacks. Richard Burton was a higher primate of this type; his spectacular gifts brought him little advancement largely because of his flair for provoking the lesser mortals who were his bureaucratic superiors. This explanation makes sense to Higley, who finds that a troop's most aggressive primate isn't usually the leader. That popular figure is apt to be a pacific, high-serotonin backslapper who knows how to work a crowd. "In stable settings a monkey who tries to run things with force gets kicked out," Higley says. "If the females don't like a male, he's gone."

**Much of the research on aggressiveness involves people who commit violent crimes. That 90 percent of such people are men implicates masculinity itself.**

Partly because the genesis of aggressiveness is more complex than that of inhibition or boldness, Jerome Kagan is uncomfortable with the notion that there is an aggressive temperament per se. In his view, aggressive children are fundamentally characterized by fearlessness; they're bold but badly brought up, so that they become bullies. Nathan Fox was surprised to discover that a few members of a group of unruly young research subjects headed perhaps toward what psychologists call "conduct problems" were described by their mothers as inhibited or anxious. Higley, too, finds some inhibited sorts among his scarred bad actors. Once again, he traces aggressiveness to the tendency to act first


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and reflect later. Despite the fearfulness associated with these inhibited monkeys' high levels of norepinephrine, Higley says, they are impulsive, a trait that correlates with their low serotonin levels and that means "they don't think way ahead, so they end up in encounters that might have been avoided."

For practical reasons, much of the research on aggressiveness involves people who commit violent crimes. That 90 percent of such people are men implicates masculinity itself, wrought by the hormone testosterone, as a major biological factor in violent behavior. Although they are by no means a homogeneous group, many of the imprisoned have a few sad biographical features in common, including a history of inappropriate aggression from early childhood, an impulsive, angry personality, and a lower-than-average verbal IQ. Some of their troubles may be inherited. An impressive Danish study comparing twins revealed that if one male identical twin was found guilty of a crime, the other was five times as likely as the average Danish man to be a criminal as well; a fraternal twin in the same situation was three times as likely to be a criminal.

Saying that violently aggressive behavior has a genetic component is a far cry from saying there's a "crime gene." In fact the only shred of evidence for such a thing concerns a rare mutation that affects violence-prone males from a single Dutch family. The strongest hypothesis for the way in which genes could help to bring about a violently aggressive disposition rests on considerable data from Scandinavia, where governments keep careful public-health records and social influences such as poverty and drugs figure less in crime. This evidence suggests that people involved in violent crimes that are "hot," or impulsive, rather than "cold," or premeditated, tend to have low levels of serotonin. The finding provides a clue to one type of aggression, but not an explanation for it.

It may have a poor image in the modern world, but Hippocrates' choleric temperament is, like all dispositions, neither good nor evil per se. General Norman Schwarzkopf's family may not relish playing board games with him, but in certain settings Schwarzkopf is the ideal companion. Even in prosaic settings "aggressiveness can be beneficial if it helps you pound the table and say, 'I want justice!'" Higley observes. "If a society wants variability, which is what ours espouses, it needs different kinds of individuals."

## How Experience Tempers Physiology

RATHER than asking how much of identity derives from genes and how much from learning, Kagan would pose "a better question: What combination of inherited physiology and experience makes a person, say, fearful, or bold?" Because they gloss over half of that combination, sensational headlines about genes that purportedly account for this or that proclivity—recently, toward violence or homosexuality—annoy thoughtful researchers, who recognize that experience channels biological proclivities. "This biological-predisposition business has become ridiculous," Kagan says. "Even if there's a genetic component to a person's behavior, that doesn't mean he has no control over it." Male primates, for example, are biologically predisposed to be promiscuous; because most men can curb that strong urge, Kagan says, wives rarely sanction husbands' adultery. "Many scientists hope to win the Nobel Prize for finding the circuit in the brain responsible for the fact that I can start to do something and then stop," he says. "That's will, which is a special quality of *Homo sapiens* that allows us to control our behavior—and it's part of nature." Although Kagan's research has made him "more permissive" regarding certain human foibles, he says, "this is the most important thing to understand: Don't assume that just because a person has a temperamental quality, he has no conscious control over it. There's always a window of nondeterminism. Think about a species of monkeys, some of whom are raised in the zoo and others in the wild. They have the same genes, but they're very different monkeys. And that's only monkeys."

That a temperamental tendency can be described as genetic doesn't mean it's fixed, or rigidly predictable. Behavior, because it's so complicated to orchestrate, is polymorphic—it requires the action of many genes in concert. Even in experiments with insects in which both heredity and environment are rigidly controlled, scientists are unable to program behavior uniformly. Human behavior is vastly more baroque, though, and a predisposition to be, say, shy, doesn't mean a person must be reserved but only that he's likelier than others to be.

Although there's no single gene for inhibition, boldness, or aggressiveness, what scientists call gene-environment correlation means that people who inherit those biopsychological tendencies will gravitate toward the kinds of experiences that reinforce the traits. The naturally fearless, for example, live in the fast lane from their diaper days. As soon as they can crawl, they're everywhere at once, exploring, falling, pushing the limits. Later "they climb a few fences, become desensitized, and climb up on the roof," Lykken says. "They'll have all sorts of experiences that other kids won't. Chuck Yeager [the test-pilot hero of *The Right Stuff*, and the first flier to break the sound barrier] could step down from the belly of the bomber into the rocket ship and push the button not because he was born with *that* difference between him and me, but because for the previous thirty years his temperament impelled him to work his way up from climbing trees through increasing degrees of danger and excitement. Genes affect the mind indirectly, creating formative experiences."

The long-standing view that early experience in the home inscribes personality on a blank mind has recently been challenged. Research suggesting that the personalities of siblings are hardly more similar than those of unrelated children im-


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plies that if the mighty family can't even out more of the differences among those who have half their genes in common, then environment does not much affect temperament. Lykken illustrates the flip side of the point with anecdotes from the University of Minnesota research on identical twins reared separately from birth. Such pairs are eerily alike not only in IQ and traits such as inhibition, boldness, and aggressiveness, but also in idiosyncrasies, such as the way two sisters count themselves to sleep, or the way two brothers have come to prefer the same cologne, hair cream, and imported toothpaste.

To say that nurture doesn't usually remodel nature does not mean that it can't. "Most families are custodial," Lykken says, "so nothing interferes with children's genetic proclivities." Fox agrees that the hands-off spirit of modern mothers and fathers means that children change less than they otherwise might. "Parents usually say, 'This is who my child *is*,'" he explains. "Depending on what they do or don't do, that child's biology is either going to express itself or be moderated. Because they're too busy and it's too hard, most parents today don't intervene, so biology mostly creates the kids' environments. But if you expect boys to play football, you're not going to say it's okay for your son to be fearful." Parental intervention, researchers say, is what changes the children who change.

At the cutting edge of research, scientists are learning that certain social experiences that cause juices to surge or subside can change not only behavior but also physiology—a discovery that means the traditional concept of temperament as inborn must be redefined. When Suomi gives a genetically uninhibited infant monkey to an inhibited foster mother, her potentially upsetting ways just roll off his back and he remains fearless; similarly, uninhibited children rarely become inhibited over time. When a monkey bred to be inhibited is reared by a bold, easygoing foster mother, however, the youngster develops not only her ways but even her low-norepinephrine chemistry. And an infant raised by inept juveniles rather than competent adults will eventually resemble, both behaviorally and physiologically, a troubled monkey selectively bred for a low serotonin level. "Experience can push genetic constitution around," Suomi says. "Its effect is so profound that I'd call it temperament."

So would Megan Gunnar, a psychologist at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development, who defines temperament as "a set of behavioral predispositions that have physiological substrates *and* experiential components." When toddlers and their mothers encounter a clown in her lab, she says, "Some go 'Whoopee!' and others 'Oh, no!'" The uninhibited children forget about their mothers and play with the clown. If an inhibited child has what Gunnar describes as a "secure" relationship with a mother who accepts his fearful reaction, his stress response, measured through the amount of cortisol in his saliva, ebbs, and he too might play. If an inhibited child has an "insecure" tie with an unaccepting mother, however, his agitation is fed by her discomfort; the more she urges him to play with the clown, the greater his stress.

Over time, repeated stressful experiences can literally, not just figuratively, alter the nervous systems of the temperamentally vulnerable. Animal research has shown that when a rat is given a small shock, it shows no marked reaction; when exposed to such stressors for five consecutive days, it shows signs of the stress response; when exposed for seven or eight days, the rat has a seizure, and thereafter this "kindled" animal will seize with little or no provocation. Experiments of this kind are of course not done with people, but Philip Gold and other neuroscientists now think that in human beings, too, by triggering a cascade of chemical reactions, serious chronic stress, particularly in early life, causes changes in the way genes within a brain cell function, permanently altering the neuron's biology. Because they require a particular type of input to turn on or off, only some of a neuron's thousands of genes, each of which is involved in some aspect of cellular structure or communication, are activated at any given moment. When a temperamentally vulnerable person is constantly bombarded with upsetting stimuli, Gold says, the genes that get turned on are those involved in the cellular components of the stress response. Over time the person's nervous system is configured accordingly, becoming a kind of two-way radio that specializes in receiving and transmitting unhappy signals. The concluding chapters in what Gold calls "the natural history of an affective disorder" chronicle the repeated struggles of such people with anxiety or what some call its chronic form, depression.

Many more women than men suffer from these so-called mood disorders, and explaining why is a tricky business. Although similar numbers of males and females are inhibited as infants, more of the latter stay that way. Among human beings, some of the discrepancy could be due to the fact that society discourages the tendency in boys. Primate research suggests that a biological explanation applies as well. After the onset of adolescence, females generally have higher levels of serotonin than males, which correlates with their greater sociability; for them, the greatest stress continues to be trouble with relationships. "After puberty, male monkeys have a much bigger set of challenges to deal with," Stephen Suomi says. "They have to leave home and get into a new troop. To help them do what they must do to survive, evolution may have blunted their response to social stress." In short, many males may be physiologically, not just psychologically, less sensitive to the social issues that upset females.

## Young Troublemakers

FORTUNATELY, the type of nervous system likeliest to be kindled by a poor environment can be strengthened by a supportive one. Kagan predicts that seventy-five out of a hundred inhibited two-year-olds will eventually have normal social lives. It's probably no coincidence


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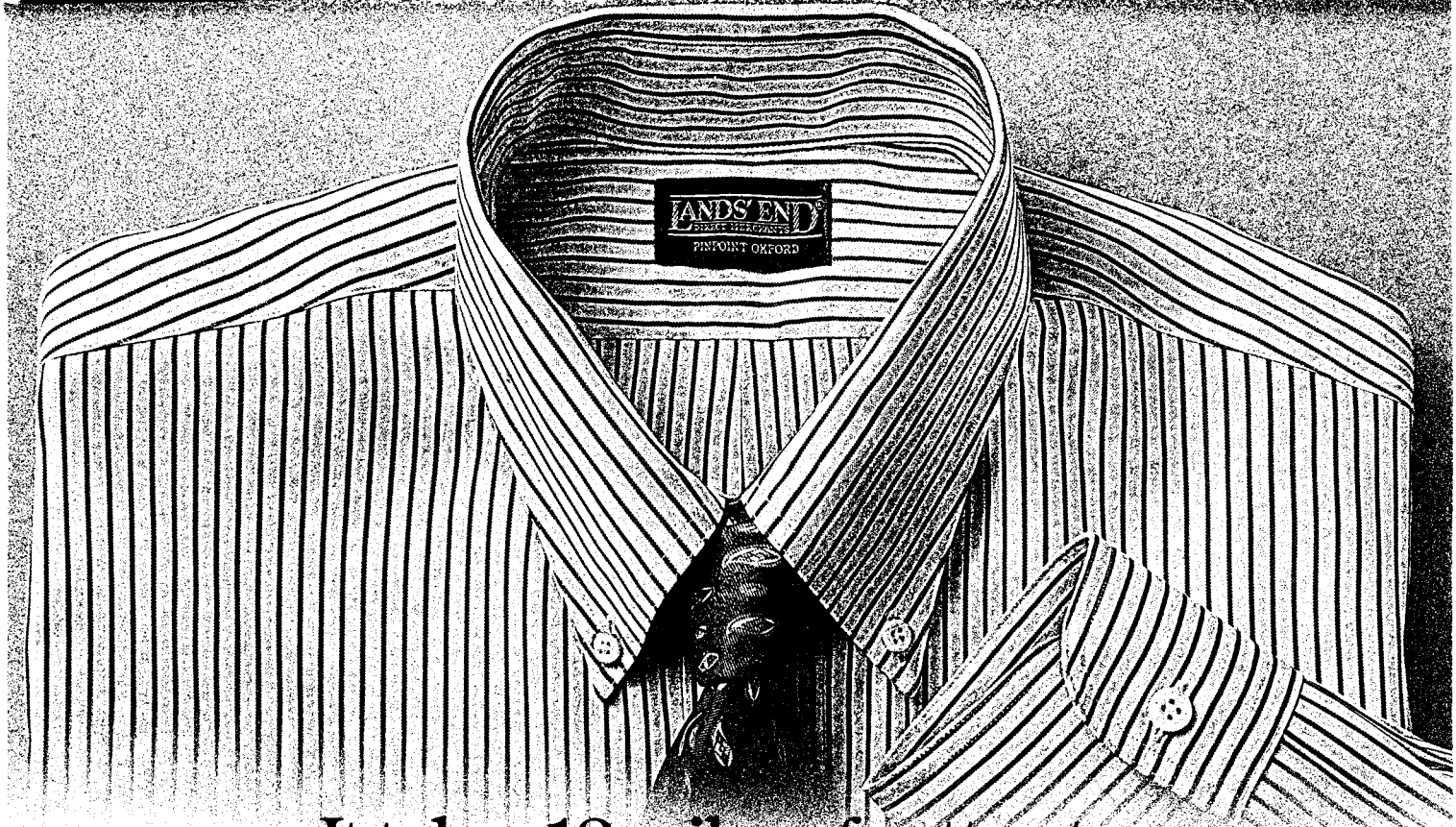


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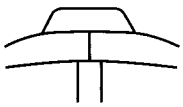

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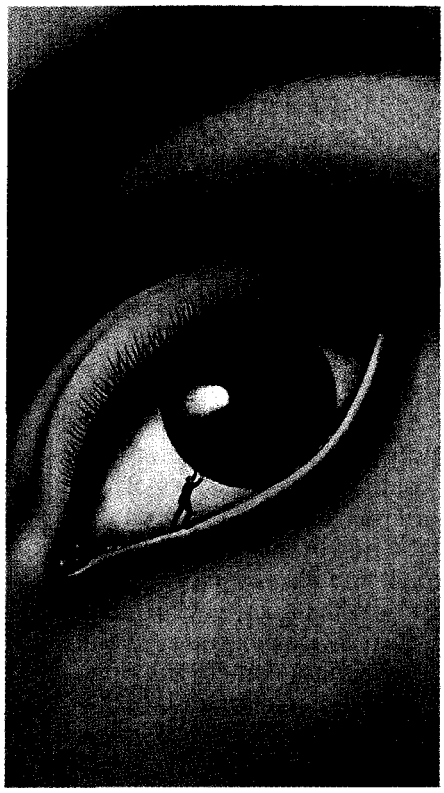
that three quarters of Gunnar's reactive children, in her estimate, have the secure relationships that will enable them to "learn to be kind to themselves and back off a little in a stressful situation, neither negating nor overdoing their anxiety, until we can't even see the stress response anymore." Gunnar says, "You may be a certain way for the rest of your life, but the big issue is how you manage it—or not." Gold says about innately inhibited individuals, "In their quiet, introverted way, they can acquire the skills that allow them to be resolute and to endure anxiety and pain. They might look timid but be like a rock. If the fate of the Western world depended on someone not giving up a secret under torture, I'd rather put it in such hands than in those of a seemingly bold person who hadn't had to learn those complex skills." Fox suspects that when inhibited children learn to handle stress, the physiological marker associated with fearfulness might disappear from their EEGs: once again, it appears that experience can modify the brain.



That message is particularly important where the aggressive are concerned. Gene-environment correlation virtually guarantees that raising aggression-prone children in settings that impose few limits—and such settings have proliferated since the 1950s—will create mayhem. When so-called "difficult" babies, who are so cranky, demanding, and hard to please that they strain even model parents, are paired with negligent mothers, for example, their risk of developing behavioral problems soars. Where the etiology of crime is concerned, even a "biological fascist" like Lykken blames nurture—specifically, the sort provided by escalating numbers of incompetent single parents. A few of the young troublemakers who are destroying schools and neighborhoods are psychopaths whose psychobiological peculiarities would challenge the civilizing skills of any parents; but the vast majority, Lykken says, have relatively normal temperaments that are simply unsocialized. "Many little boys are potential criminals who find it perfectly natural to take things, break things, and beat up on people. It's their parents' responsibility to stomp some of that out—to inhibit antisocial behavior, instill prosocial values, and cultivate the work ethic. Because it's such a tough job, it takes two people. Adoption agencies usually give babies to mature, self-supporting, sane married couples who have no criminal records. Why should there be fewer criteria for starting off a biological child?"

Temperament research shows that good parenting can have potent effects. If it can alter a hypersensitive physiology, Higley reasons, it could affect a belligerent one, too. He plans to rear impulsive, ornery young monkeys with adults "who demand that they behave appropriately, and punish them when they don't," and to monitor changes in their neurochemistry along with changes in their behavior. He suspects that he'll see their low serotonin levels rise. Like many of his biology-minded colleagues, Higley often argues from the other side of the ideological fence, "trying to convince people that having a genetically modified trait doesn't mean that you're programmed." He says, "Someone could be disposed to respond with inappropriate aggression but learn early in life that if he does, he'll get into trouble. He may also learn to like the reinforcement he gets from positive interactions."

**That a temperamental tendency can be described as genetic doesn't mean it's fixed or rigidly predictable. Behavior is polymorphic—it requires the action of many genes.**

As is the case with Slick Willy, praise can sometimes inspire better behavior than punishment, which only makes some tough kids tougher. "If your temperament is such that fear doesn't play a big role in your life," Lykken says, "you're less likely to pay attention to punishment, which depends on the desire to avoid anxiety. That kind of child may care if people stop admiring him, though, so the way to socialize him is by giving him a sense of pride, as successful coaches do."

At a time of fractured families and communities, research on the modification of temperament has very practical applications. Some so-called "resilient" children, who turn out well amid the neglect and poverty that stunt so many others, inherit some of their strength. If early social support can override biology, however, the resilient can be made as well as born.



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## Time and Direction

TINKERING with adult temperament is more difficult—so much so that one might consider simply making the best of what one has got. Even if that's not so bad, the satisfaction afforded by a disposition depends greatly on milieu. The inhibition that America finds sissified is part of the national character of Japan, for example, and it has been said that Lord Byron, the hero of the Romantic era, would have been regarded as a madman in the previous Age of Enlightenment. In *Twilight of the Golds*, a recent Broadway play, characters debate whether a fetus destined to be homosexual should be aborted. When the Human Genome Project is finished, in ten or fifteen years, temperamental traits could inspire similarly chilling discussions. As Kagan says, "When the masses can use genetic information to mate selectively, society will face a big ethical problem."

Partly because social influences have such a profound effect on how we regard temperament, Kagan feels that "whether you should try to change or accept yourself is a political question." He says, "There are many good things about being, say, introverted—think of Wittgenstein. But now the cultural ideal is Bill Clinton. If you happen to have an unfashionable personality, you suffer the consequences." Sometimes a deeper understanding of why one is the way one is brings peace. Once, after Kagan gave a talk at a scientific conference, the scientist who had spoken before him invited him to lunch. "'For sixty years I've been blaming my mother for my introversion,' he said, 'and now I see that it's temperament,'" Kagan recalls. "Suddenly, he saw his life differently and felt better about it."

The no-frills approach to coping with one's temperament is choosing settings that suit it. Richard Burtons and Jane Digbys don't belong on assembly lines, nor Queen Victorias in used-car lots. "If you have brittle bones," Eysenck says, "there's not a lot you can do about it other than to avoid risky activities like skiing. If you're inclined to be anxious, you can avoid the situations that produce those symptoms."

Sometimes a disposition can be neither accepted nor accommodated. "Temperament casts its longest shadow in those who have a very dour tone," Kagan says. "There are some people who never feel good inside. If we could enter deep into Sylvia Plath's limbic system, and listen, and feel what she felt . . ." Kagan allows that psychotherapy—particularly the behavioral kind, in which the client learns new responses to old stimuli—has "some modest success in helping people change certain qualities." Akiskal is a bit more positive about the open-ended psychodynamic therapy so often criticized these days. Although its results resist quantification, "the more leisurely treatment helps those who want to be more reflective and insightful," he says. "We may simply not know how to measure its efficacy."

As Peter D. Kramer observes in the bestseller *Listening to Prozac*, drugs designed to alter the transmitter imbalances linked to depression and other disorders are increasingly touted as temperamental tune-ups for people who are not ill in the conventional sense but want to be bolder, say, or more energetic. Gold dismisses the notion that such medicines can be used as psychic vitamins to pep up a normal personality. "People whose arousal systems are not perturbed do not respond to these agents. The idea that healthy people who take Prozac feel better is absolutely ridiculous." He finds repellent as well as unrealistic the notion that psychiatry will someday provide painless living through chemistry. "To respond to the loss of a loved one or a cherished dream casually is grotesque. To 'feel better' means to feel one's feelings better, including sadness or anger, without getting stuck in them."

The easiest way to experience a change in temperament is to wait. From childhood through old age, our psyches alter along with our bodies, according to inexorable schedules set by our biological clocks. Toddlers and teenagers offer flamboyant examples of this phenomenon, and subtler manifestations may include what Margaret Mead called "post-menopausal zest." Although middle-aged men don't undergo the well-defined endocrinological shift that women do, Auke Tellegen, a psychologist at the University of Minnesota, who devised the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire, suspects that they experience something similar, albeit more gradual. "For lack of hormones," he says, "perhaps a man will be a Zen monk at seventy." Even thrill-seeking psychopaths lose some of what Lykken calls their "lustful vigor" in their forties. Some develop respectable ways of walking on the wild side. After spending much of his earlier life in prison, one of Lykken's subjects succeeded in business and bought a plane. "I set off to go flying with him," Lykken says, "thinking, 'What am I doing? He's going to stand the plane on end and scare me to death.' But he flew like a transport pilot, because his self-esteem is now involved with being licensed to fly jets and do all sorts of things the average amateur can't."

As the high-flying ex-con illustrates, one's *mode* of involvement may not change much, but one's focus can, creating the possibility of a different kind of life with the same old temperament. Religious conversions are Tellegen's favorite example: "Charles Colson would have beat his grandmother to death when he was with Nixon, but then he was 'born again.' He probably always had a very emotional, intense temperament, but now he has different enemies and friends. His nature didn't change—he just does something else with all that zeal."


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# FRENCH POEMS

*by W. S. Merwin*

## VEHICLES

This is a place on the way after the distances
can no longer be kept straight here in this dark corner
of the barn a mound of wheels has convened along
raveling courses to stop in a single moment
and lie down as still as the chariots of the Pharaohs
some in pairs that rolled as one over the same roads
to the end and never touched each other until they
arrived here some that broke by themselves and were left
until they could be repaired some that went only
to occasions before my time and some that have spun
across other countries through uncounted summers
now they go all the way back together the tall
cobweb-hung models of galaxies in their rings
of rust leaning against the stone hail from René's
manure cart the year he wanted to store them here
because there was nobody left who could make them like that
in case he should need them and there are the carriage wheels
that Merot said would be worth a lot some day
and the rim of the spare from bald Bleret's green Samson
that rose like Borobudur out of the high grass
behind the old house by the river where he stuffed
mattresses in the morning sunlight and the hens
scavenged around his shoes in the days when the black
top-hat sedan still towered outside Sandeau's cow barn
with velvet upholstery and sconces for flowers and room
for two calves instead of the back seat when their time came



Illustrations by Julia Moburg

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## THE SPEED OF LIGHT

So gradual in those summers was the going
of the age it seemed that the long days setting out
when the stars faded over the mountains were not
leaving us even as the birds woke in full song and the dew
glittered in the webs it appeared then that the clear morning
opening into the sky was something of ours
to have and keep and that the brightness we could not touch
and the air we could not hold had come to be there all the time
for us and would never be gone and that the axle
we did not hear was not turning when the ancient car
coughed in the roofer's barn and rolled out echoing
first thing into the lane and the only tractor
in the village rumbled and went into its rusty
mutterings before heading out of its lean-to
into the cow pats and the shadow of the lime tree
we did not see that the swallows flashing and the sparks
of their cries were fast in the spokes of the hollow
wheel that was turning and turning us taking us
all away as one with the tires of the baker's van
where the wheels of bread were stacked like days in calendars
coming and going all at once we did not hear
the rim of the hour in whatever we were saying
or touching all day we thought it was there and would stay
it was only as the afternoon lengthened on its
dial and the shadows reached out farther and farther
from everything that we began to listen for what
might be escaping us and we heard high voices ringing
the village at sundown calling their animals home
and then the bats after dark and the silence on its road

## END OF A DAY

In the long evening of April through the cool light
Bayle's two sheep dogs sail down the lane like magpies
for the flock a moment before he appears near the oaks
a stub of a man rolling as he approaches
smiling and smiling and his dogs are afraid of him
we stand among the radiant stones looking out over
green lucent wheat and earth combed red under bare walnut limbs
bees hanging late in cowslips and lingering bird cherry
stumps and brush that were the grove of hazel trees
where the land turns above the draped slopes and the valley
filled with its one sunbeam and we exchange a few questions
as though nothing were different but he has bulldozed the upland
pastures and the shepherds' huts into piles of rubble
and has his sheep fenced in everyone's meadows now
the smell of box and damp leaves drifts from the woods where a blackbird
is warning of nightfall Bayle has plans to demolish
the ancient walls of the lane and level it wide
so that trucks can go all the way down to where the lambs
with perhaps two weeks to live are waiting for him at the wire
he hurries toward them while the sun sinks and the hour
turns chill as iron and in the oaks the first nightingales
of the year kindle their unapproachable voices


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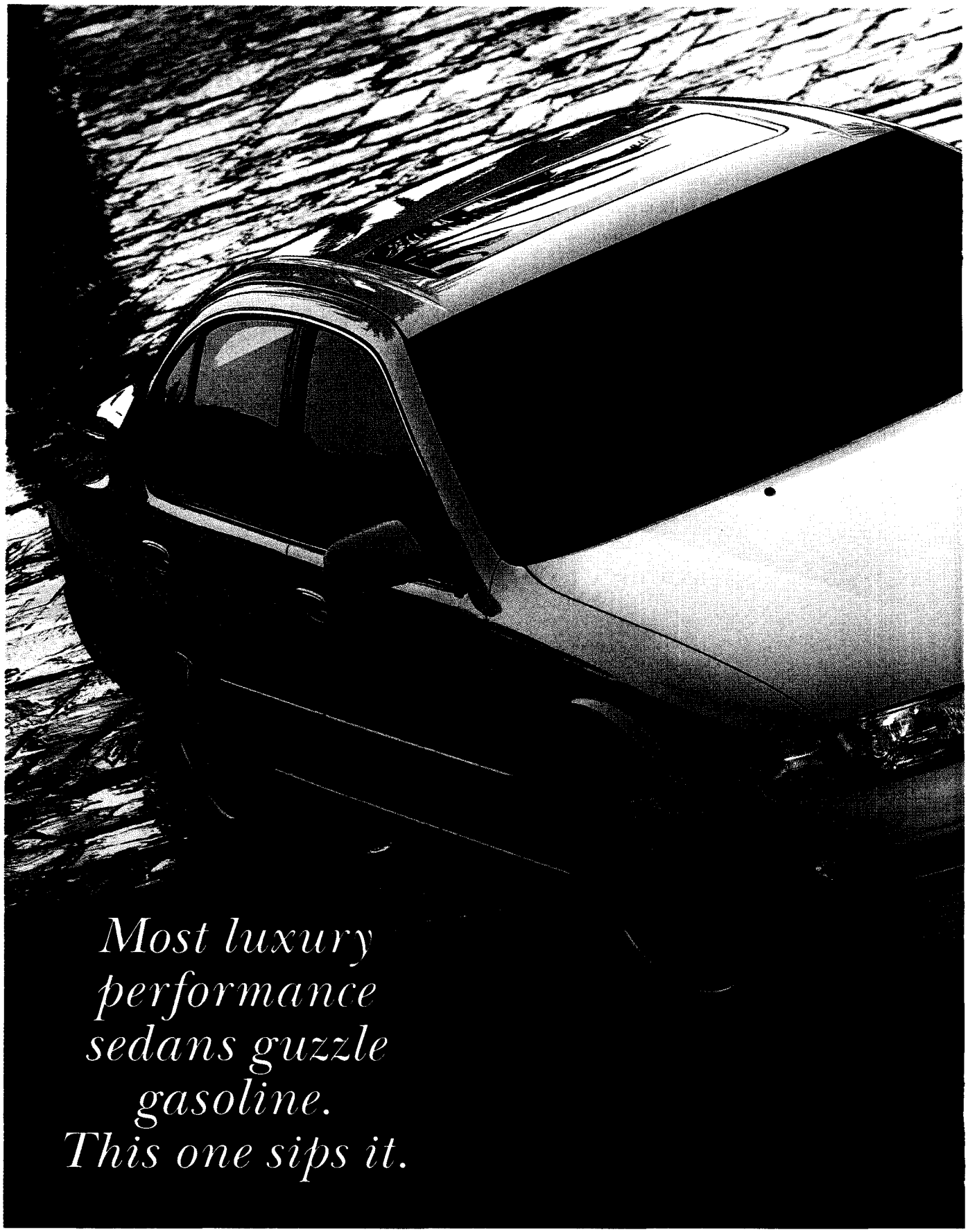


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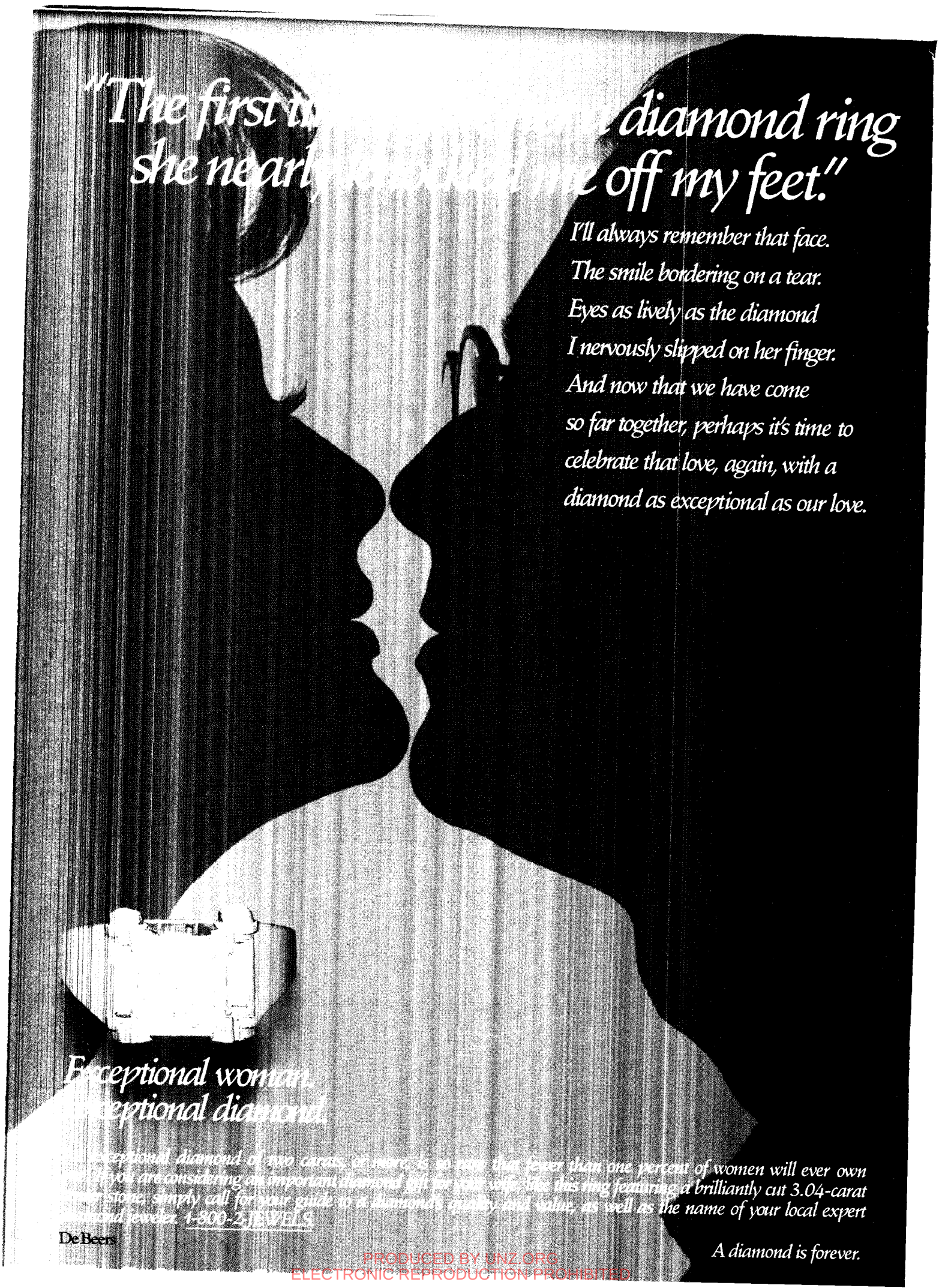


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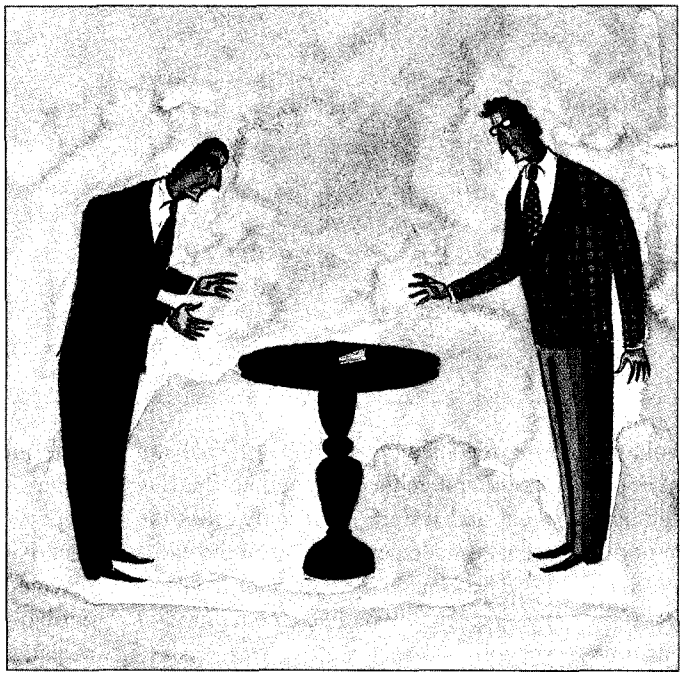
# THE END of the Book?

by D. T. MAX

*"We'll teach you about multimedia before your kids have to."*—Billboard on Route 101 near Silicon Valley

An office-party atmosphere pervaded the headquarters of *Wired* magazine, the newly created oracle of the computer-literate generation. *Wired* is housed on the third floor of a flat, low brick building with plain-pine interiors in an industrial section of San Francisco south of Market Street. The area is known as Multimedia Gulch, for the scores of small companies working in the neighborhood which mix sound, video, and text into experimental interactive multimedia computer products that they hope will one day sell millions of copies. *Wired* is not an ordinary computer magazine: it promises the faithful reader not mere computing power—something available from a grown-up computer magazine like *Macworld*, which happens to be across the street—but, more important, hipness, the same sense of being ahead of the curve that once attached to a new Bob Dylan album or Richard Brautigan book.



*Right now interactive multimedia are, as one executive puts it, "a solution in search of a problem"—that is, they do what books do, only more expensively. Is there reason to believe, the author asks, that electronic media will* not *do to the printed word what the automobile did to the horse?*

The weekday afternoon I was there, hero sandwiches lay on the table, the magazine's pet gray parrot was hanging outside its cage, and young men and women with sophisticated eyewear sat rapt before their computer screens. The reference folders and layout paraphernalia common to magazine editorial departments were scattered around. The ringing of the phones was constant. When I had first called *Wired*'s cofounder, Louis Rossetto, in the summer of 1993, I got through to him immediately, and he had, if anything, too much time to speculate about the shape of things to come. Several months later I had to go through a secretary and a publicist for my interview, and once I arrived, I was made to wait while more-urgent calls were put through. What happened in the interim is that the information highway became a hot subject. Rossetto was now every media journalist's and Hollywood agent's first call.

What I wanted from Louis Rossetto was his opinion on whether the rise of the computer culture that his magazine covered would end with the elimination by CD-ROMs and networked computer databases of the hardcover, the paperback, and the world of libraries and literate culture that had grown up alongside them. Was print on its way out? And if it was, what would happen to the publishers who had for generations put out books, and to the writers who had written them? Or was there



Illustrations by Benoit

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something special about the book that would ensure that no technical innovation could ever supplant it? Would the book resist the CD-ROM and the Internet just as it has resisted radio, television, and the movies?

Finally I was taken into the sunlit confines of his office. Bookshelves ran along one wall. A forty-five-year-old career journalist with shoulder-grazing gray hair, Rossetto is a late convert to computers. He spent much of the 1980s in Europe, and gives off a mild sense of disengagement—there is a touch of the sixties about him, as there is about much else in the Gulch. Now he set out his vision of a fast-changing computerized, paperless, nearly book-free society, and did so with a certainty that would frighten even someone whose sense of equilibrium, unlike mine, did not involve visits to bookstores or the belief that last year's laptop is basically good enough. "The changes going on in the world now are literally a revolution in progress, a revolution that makes political revolution seem like a game," Rosetto, who recently sold a minority interest in his magazine to Condé Nast, said. "It will revolutionize how people work, how they communicate, and how they entertain themselves, and it is the biggest engine for change in our world today. We're looking at the end of a twenty- or thirty- or forty-year process, from the invention of tubes to transistors to fiber-optic and cable to the development of cable networks, until we've reached critical mass today."

I asked if there was no downside, no tradeoff for all that information in the world that was to come. "It doesn't keep me up at night, I admit," he said. "Written information is a relatively new phenomenon. Depositing it and being able to reference it centuries later is not common human experience. In some ways what is happening with on-line is a return to our earlier oral tradition. In other ways, it is utterly new, a direct connection of minds. Humans have always been isolated, and now we're starting to see electronic connections generating an intellectual organism of their own, literally a quantum leap beyond our experience with consciousness."

This is classic 1990s cybervisionarism, repeated up and down the halls of *Wired* and echoed throughout the Bay area, and it derives directly from the teenage-male personalities of the hackers who created the computer industry: cyberspace will be like a better kind of school.

There are three principal articles of faith behind this vision. 1) The classroom will be huge: the linking of information worldwide will cause a democratic explosion in the accessibility of knowledge. 2) The classroom will be messy: the sense of information as an orderly and retrievable quantity will decline, and you won't necessarily be able to find what you're looking for in cyberspace at any given time. 3) There will be no teachers: the "controllers of information"—censors, editors, and studio executives—will disappear, and the gates of public discourse will swing open before everyone who can get on-line. Anyone can publish; anyone can read what is published; anyone can comment on what he or she has read. Rossetto had been delineating his vision for twenty minutes, but suddenly it was time to go. An assistant popped in to pull him into an editorial meeting. "I have a pretty cynical view of most of the American media," Rossetto said before leaving (read: "You'll get this wrong. You'll be hostile"). "Their jobs are at stake, because their businesses are threatened. Take *Time* magazine. What function would it have in the modern world?"

One look at *Wired* suggests a gap between message and messenger. *Wired* looks more radical than it is. It cheerleads and debunks its subjects using editorial formulas that came in with the nineteenth-century magazine—a fictional takeoff on Microsoft, written by Douglas Coupland, the author of *Generation X*; a classic star cover on Laurie Anderson, "America's multimediatrix"—rather than harnessing any global back-and-forth among literate minds. Although *Wired* communicates extensively by E-mail with its readers, conducts forums, and makes back issues available on-line, its much-repeated goal of creating a magazine—currently called *HotWired*—that is especially designed to exist electronically remains fuzzy. For the moment this is no open democracy, and *Wired* is no computer screen—its bright graphics would make a fashion magazine envious. *Wired* celebrates what doesn't yet exist by exploiting a format that does: it's as if a scribe copied out a manuscript extolling the beauty that would one day be print.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF THE BOOK

OVERHYPED or not, interactive multimedia do hold vast potential for the companies that in the next decades back the right products in the right formats. Multimedia are not


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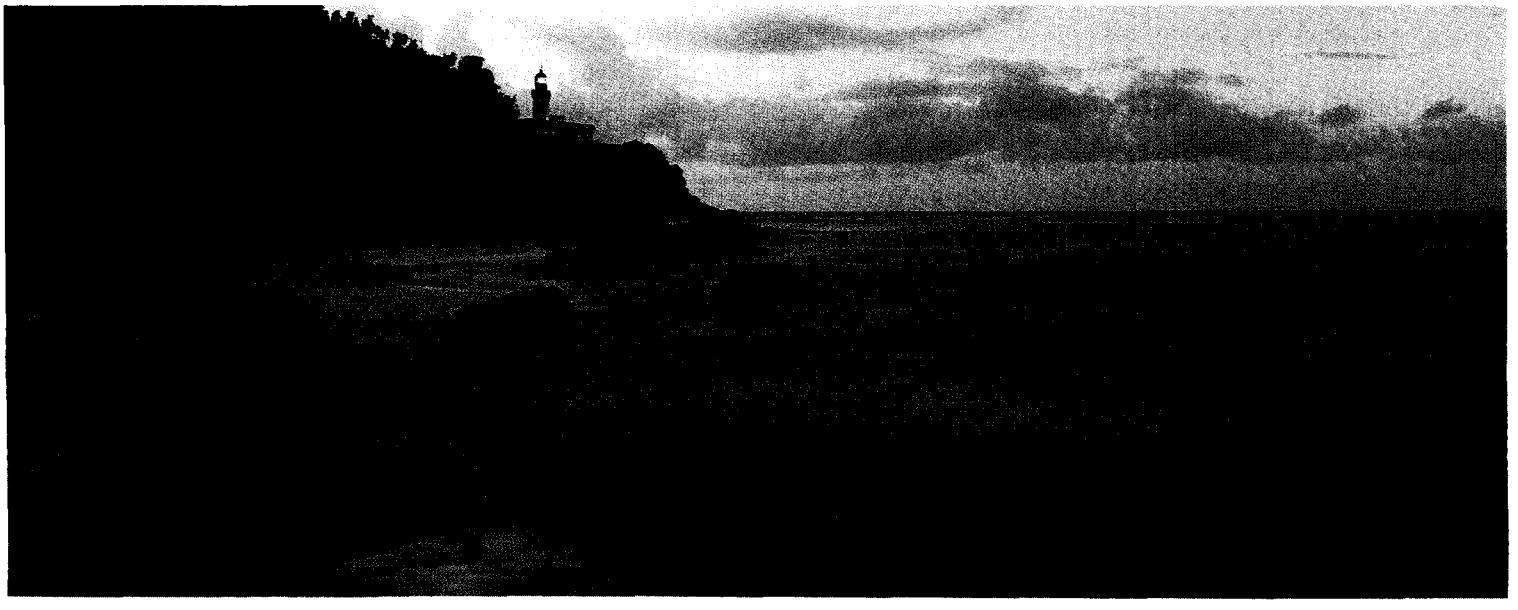

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new—a child's pop-up book is one example, and an illustrated pre-Gutenberg Bible is another. But interactive multimedia as envisioned by the computer industry (especially if television cables or telephone wires are reconfigured to accommodate two-way high-quality video digital transmissions—technologies that may be in place on a national scale sometime around the millennium) have great potential, because they would persuade consumers to bring software into their homes as they brought it into their offices in the 1980s. Who wouldn't want a screen that accessed all currently existing forms of information, from mail to movies, and did so with great convenience and flexibility?

Even if this vision is only partly realized, the book, the newspaper, and the video will be hard-pressed to maintain their place in our culture. Look at the book without sentiment and its limitations are evident: books can excite the imagination, but they can't literally make you see and hear. "What is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?" Lewis Carroll's Alice grouses, before tumbling down the rabbit hole into the more absorbing precincts of Wonderland, in one of the favorite texts of hackers. Interactive-multimedia designers, with their brew of sights, sounds, and words, believe that they could keep Alice (her age puts her very much in their target group) aboveground and interested. Or a multimedia designer could expand the book's plot line, giving the reader the choice of whether Alice goes down the hole or decides to stick around and read alongside her sister on the riverbank. The reader could hear Alice's voice, or ask her questions about herself, the answers to which are only implicit in the book.

When something intrigues the readers of a printed book, they have to wrestle with an index and then, perhaps, go to a library to find out more about the subject; they can't just hit a search button to log on to a database attached to the book and read something else on the same subject, as they can on a computer. "I decided books were obsolete thirty-four years ago," says Ted Nelson, an early computer hacker who coined the word "hypertext" in the early sixties to describe how knowledge would be accessed if all information were available simultaneously. "I have

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## MAYAKOVSKY IN NEW YORK: A Found Poem

Lifted, with permission, from Vladimir Mayakovsky's "My Discovery of America" (1926), in *America Through Russian Eyes*, edited and translated by Olga Peters Hasty and Susanne Fusso.

New York: You take a train that rips through versts.
It feels as if the trains were running over your ears.

For many hours the train flies along the banks
of the Hudson about two feet from the water. At the stops,
passengers run out, buy up bunches of celery,
and run back in, chewing the stalks as they go.

Bridges leap over the train with increasing frequency.

At each stop an additional story grows
onto the roofs. Finally houses with squares
and dots of windows rise up. No matter how far
you throw back your head, there are no tops.

Time and again, the telegraph poles are made
of wood. Maybe it only seems that way.

In the narrow canyons between the buildings, a sort
of adventurer-wind howls and runs away
along the versts of the ten avenues. Below
flows a solid human mass. Only their yellow
waterproof slickers hiss like samovars and blaze.

The construction rises and with it the crane, as if
the building were being lifted up off the ground
by its pigtail. It is hard to take it seriously.

The buildings are glowing with electricity; their evenly
cut-out windows are like a stencil. Under awnings
the papers lie in heaps, delivered by trucks.
It is impossible to tear oneself away from this spectacle.

At midnight those leaving the theaters drink a last soda.
Puddles of rain stand cooling. Poor people scavenge
bones. In all directions is a labyrinth of trains
suffocated by vaults. There is no hope, your eyes
are not accustomed to seeing such things.

They are starting to evolve an American gait out
of the cautious steps of the Indians on the paths of empty
Manhattan. Maybe it only seems that way.

—ANNIE DILLARD


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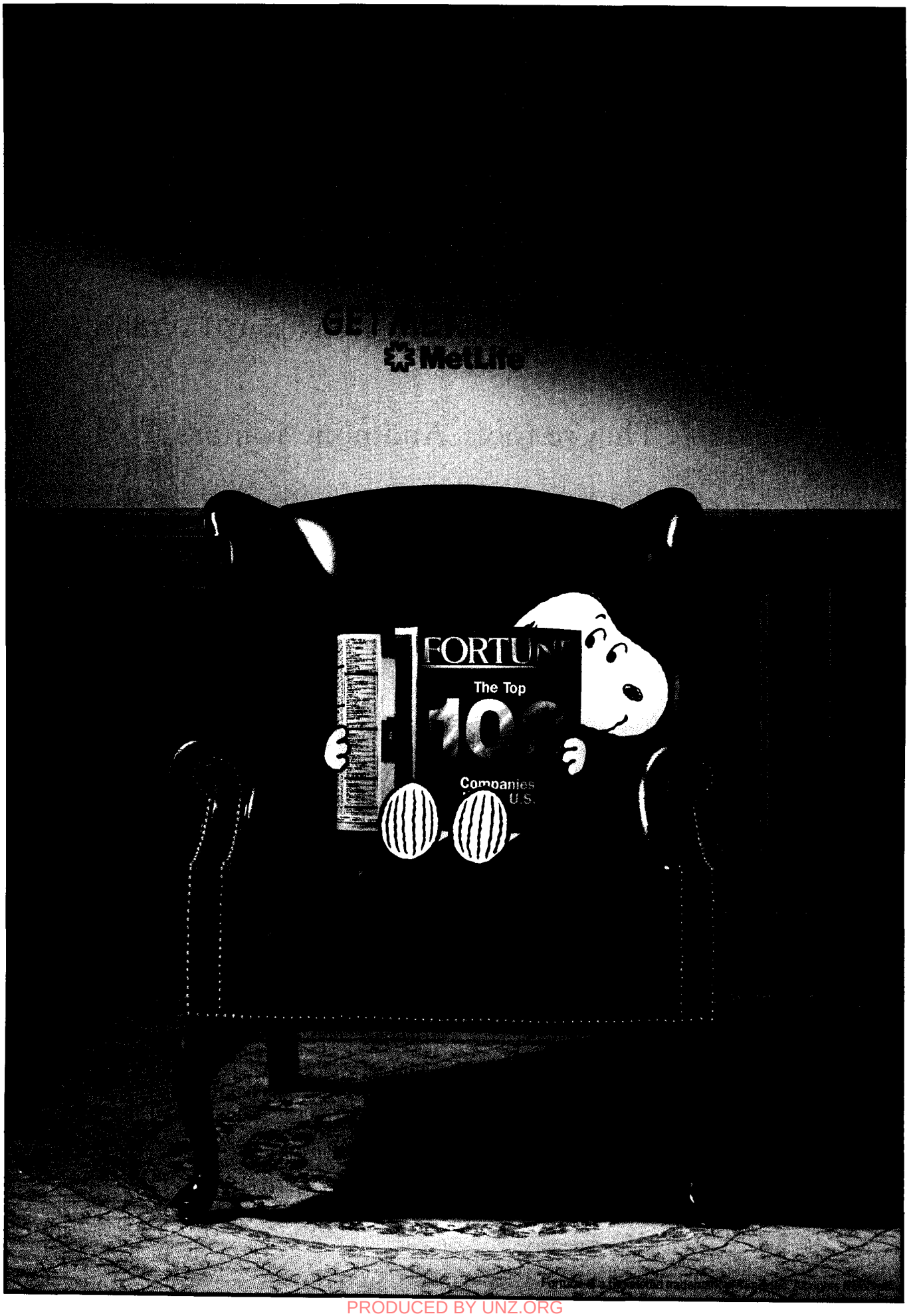


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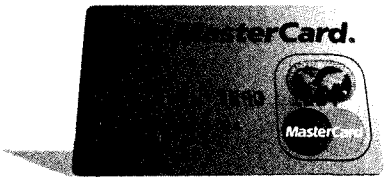
# It's About Time Someone Took The *Plastic* Out Of Credit Cards.

In the real world, gold cards aren't status symbols.




They're tools. And none is more useful than Gold MasterCard.® You see, no card is more accepted on the planet. It gives you a credit line of at least $5000, and you can use it to get local currency all over the world, so it's a smart thing to have. Really. *Gold MasterCard.*

*It's more than a gold card. It's smart money.*™ MasterCard

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thousands of books and I love them. It's only intertwining I want more of."

But such intertwining—a vast linkage of electronic text across databases worldwide—would inevitably push the printed word to the margins and replace it with sleeker, more efficient text conveyers. It is not the viability of text itself that is in question. On the contrary, whether paper gives way to the computer screen or not, there is little question that words as the cornerstone of communication are safe. "*Littera scripta manet*," an anonymous Roman wrote; "The written word endures." This is a comforting quotation—typically if erroneously attributed to the poet Horace—that writers about multimedia are fond of using. In fact, words are multiplying wildly. In the world of computers they are a bargain compared with images: cheap to transport and easy to store. Probably more words are put out in a week by the 20 million people who use the loosely strung computer networks that constitute the Internet than are published by all major American publishing companies in a year. There's a "Poetry Corner" and bulletin boards where new novels get posted constantly. In a recent announcement a nonprofit organization called Project Gutenberg, run out of a university in Illinois, presented as its mysteriously precise goal "To Give Away One Trillion E[lectronic] Text Files [of classic books] by December 21, 2001." When I mentioned the scope of fiction on the Internet to the novelist John Updike, he said lightly, "I imagine most of that stuff on the information highway is roadkill anyway." And of course he is right. But his is a minority opinion outside the circles of tastemakers.

## VAPORWARE INTIMIDATION

TEXT and books are not, however, joined at the hip—words don't need print. "Books on paper are a medium unto themselves," Louis Rossetto says, "and my sense is that anything that is stand-alone is a dead end." But even to Rossetto a world completely without books seems unlikely. One view is that the book will become the equivalent of the horse after the invention of the automobile or the phonograph record after the arrival of the compact disc—a thing for eccentrics, hobbyists, and historians. It will not disappear, but it will become obsolete. Multimedia programmers themselves disagree sharply on whether this will come to pass in five years, ten years, or never. One question is whether there is money to be made in the production of multimedia. Another is how good multimedia products will ever be, for by industry admission they are not very good now. The great majority of the 3,000 multimedia products launched last year were little more than rudimentary efforts. "I think that there are fewer than thirty titles with good, solid, deep information out there," Rick Fischer, the director of product development at Sony Electronic Publishing, says. "The majority of titles are kind of pseudo-multimedia. People are still learning how to do this." Besides, computer companies are not as excited by books as they are by games, which represent an ever-increasing share of the market. Sony, for example, has backed an interactive game version of its movie *Bram Stoker's Dracula*—Harker races against rats, wolves, and flaming torches to slay the Prince of Darkness—rather than the book *Dracula,* 300 pages of print that could be augmented with perhaps a moving illustration or two.

Publishers are terrified. They have read a thousand times that one day we will play games, shop, watch movies, read books, and do research all on our computer or television screens. Computer companies are skillful at bluffing one another, forever claiming that they are nearly ready to release a hot new product, which is in truth barely in prototype. This kind of nonproduct has the nickname "vaporware" within the industry. But publishers, unfamiliar with computer culture, believe the hype. In the past year *Publishers Weekly* ran six major stories on how CD-ROM and the Internet will remake publishing. The comments of Laurence Kirshbaum, the president of Warner Books, a subsidiary of Time Warner, were not untypical: "I don't know if there's the smell of crisis in the air, but there should be. Publishers should be sleeping badly these days. They have to be prepared to compete with software giants like [Microsoft's chairman] Bill Gates." Publishers are most of all afraid of doing nothing—as hardback publishers did when they ignored the paperback explosion of the 1960s and 1970s. So they are rushing to form electronic-publishing divisions and to find partners in the software business. "Eighteen months ago no one was talking about multimedia and CD-ROMs seriously, and now everyone is deeply involved and deeply conscious of them," says Alberto Vitale, the chairman of the normally cautious Random House, Inc., which has signed a co-venture deal with Broderbund, a leading children's software developer in Novato, California, to create children's interactive multimedia. Putting Dr. Seuss on CD-ROM is one of their first efforts. The Palo Alto "media kitchen" owned by Viacom, where the company's film, television, and book divisions cooperate—at least theoretically—on interactive-multimedia research, is designing new travel guides: why actually go to San Francisco when by 1995 you will be able to take a virtual walking tour on a Frommer CD-ROM? Interest has even percolated into the last redoubt of traditional publishing, the firm of Alfred A. Knopf. Since its inception Knopf has placed great emphasis on the book as handsome object. But Knopf's president attended the first International Illustrated Book and New Media Publishing Market fair, held earlier this year, which was designed to introduce multimedia's various content providers to one another. (The fact that the fair was in Cannes probably did not hurt attendance.)

Behind the stampede into electronic publishing is doubtless a widespread feeling among those in conventional publishing that the industry is in dire, if ill-defined, trouble. A decade-long trend among major publishers toward publishing fewer trade books recently had an impact on four imprints in just two months, most notably a near-total cutback of Harcourt, Brace's trade depart-


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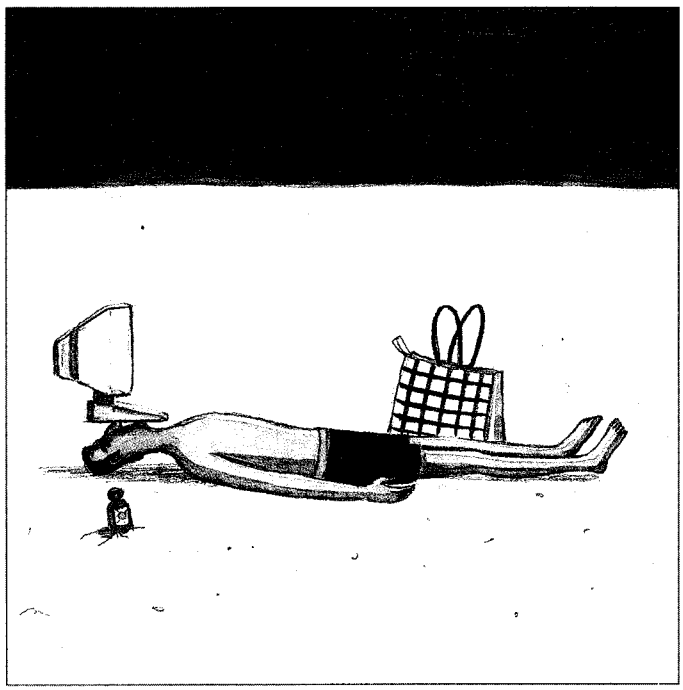
ment (the publishers of T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Alice Walker) and the closing of Ticknor & Fields adult books, a Houghton Mifflin imprint (which included William Gass and Robert Stone among its authors). Aggressive marketing has allowed publishers to sell more copies of their top titles, creating the illusion of pink-cheeked health in some years. But after decades of competition from radio, television, movies, videos, and Americans' increasingly long workdays, it is hard to imagine how the publishers of mainstream fiction and nonfiction in book form will ever again publish as many titles as they did in the past; after all, popular fiction magazines never recovered from the advent of radio serials. Giants like Doubleday and Putnam publish perhaps a third as many hardcover books as they did ten years ago, and McGraw-Hill, once the publisher of Vladimir Nabokov and hundreds of other authors, is out of the new-trade-book business altogether. Recently Random House sent a glass-is-half-full letter to book-review editors, letting them know that the company would be making their jobs easier by publishing fewer books. According to a 1993 survey by Dataquest, a San Jose information-technology market-research firm, most employees in the multimedia-content industry come from traditional print backgrounds. And the extremely rudimentary employment statistics that exist for the publishing industry show a decline since the late 1980s in New York–based publishing jobs, though it is hardly enough of one to confirm a sea change in publishing's fortunes, or to suggest that Armageddon is around the corner. Last year nearly 50,000 new titles destined for bookstores were published, and total consumer-reference CD-ROM software sales amounted to only about three percent of trade-book sales.

Besides, the computer industry acknowledges that what most readers think of as books—that is, novels and nonfiction text—gain nothing from being on screen; the appeal of the product depends on the quality of the prose and the research, neither of which is enhanced by current screens. Whether you scroll down a screen or turn a page to read *The Bridges of Madison County* makes a great deal of difference in the quality of the reading experience. "I just don't personally believe in reading novels on a computer screen," says Olaf Olafsson, the president of Sony Electronic Publishing and the author of *Absolution*, a novel published in March by Pantheon Books. He says that he would never want to see his own work on a computer: "There's a lot of content that's now being delivered on paper that's fine on paper." The book has great advantages over the computer: it's light and it's cheap. That it has changed little in 400 years suggests an uncommonly apt design. John Updike says, "It seems to me the book has not just aesthetic values—the charming little clothy box of the thing, the smell of the glue, even the print, which has its own beauty. But there's something about the sensation of ink on paper that is in some sense a thing, a phenomenon rather than an epiphenomenon. I can't break the association of electric trash with the computer screen. Words on the screen give the sense of being just another passing electronic wriggle." You can drop a book in the bathtub, dry it out on the radiator, and still read it. You can put it in the attic, pull it out 200 years later, and probably decipher the words. You can curl up in bed with it or get suntan lotion on it. These are definitely not possibilities suggested by the computer. A well-thumbed paperback copy of John Grisham blowing in a beach breeze represents a technological stronghold the computer may never invade.



### A SOLUTION IN SEARCH OF A PROBLEM

LOVERS of literature (and schlock) may not see much change, then, but that doesn't mean publishers are in for an easy ride. Novels, nonfiction, and belles lettres are a prestige sideshow for publishers—they amount to only a few billion dollars in a roughly $18 billion book industry. Take dictionaries and encyclopedias, which are in effect databases in book form. The hand cannot match a computer chip in accessing given references, which constitutes the primary function of such works. Last year the 1989 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the flagship publication of the 400-year-old university press, sold four times as many copies in a new CD-ROM version as in its traditional twenty-volume book form. The company has said that the next print edition, due in a decade, may well be the last. At an October, 1993, celebration at the New York Public Library in honor of the publication of the fifth edition of the *Columbia Encyclopedia* in both book form and (a year hence) on CD-ROM, one guest speaker commented that the next edition, whenever it was ready,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# Going to Hell in a Handbasket

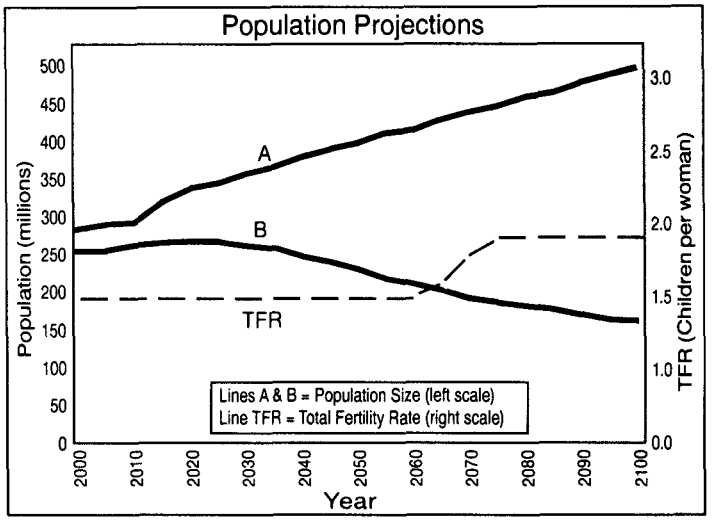
***That headline may not be scholarly, and the tone is perhaps too flippant for a deadly serious matter. Still, it would be hard to find a more apt description of where our country is heading as a direct result of the relentless growth of our population.***

The arguments for first halting, then reversing, U.S. population growth would seem so compelling as to raise the question "Why isn't it being done?".

*Line A* shows where our population is headed with current levels of fertility and immigration— to nearly 400 million by 2050, and to nearly a half billion by the end of the next century!

Such population growth would surely lead to disaster for future generations of Americans. It would have profound impacts upon the environment, on renewable resources like farmland, forests and water, and on our society itself.

A smaller population would help the nation deal with the social, environmental and resource problems that confront us, yet very few of our politicians and pundits even consider the idea.




On the assumption that they are held back by unwarranted fears, we will try to explain briefly by what relatively gentle adjustments we could turn U.S. population growth around.

*Line B* shows what could be achieved with the "two child family" and with immigration reduced to the levels that prevailed for much of this century.

If parents indeed "stop at two" it would lead to a total fertility rate (TFR) of about 1.5 children, because not all women have children, and some have only one. A national TFR of 1.5 would make possible a gradual turnaround in the population growth that drives our social and environmental problems.

## We Need to Reduce Immigration

But the two child family alone will not enable the nation to reach a smaller population size. It would need to be accompanied by a substantial reduction in current levels of immigration.

In 1900 we were a nation of less than 76 million. Almost half of the population increase since then has been post-1900 immigrants and their descendants. The Census Bureau projects that our present population of some 260 million will increase by 2050 to 392 million (middle projection), or even to 522 million (high projection).

Of the population growth anticipated for the 21st century, nearly 90 percent will be post-2000 immigrants and their descendants. In other words, immigration is the driving force behind a disastrous surge of population growth.

The average annual level of recorded gross immigration from 1924 through the 1960s was 198,000. Immigration is now over a million per year. If we were willing to bring net immigration down to 200,000 a year, our demographic future would improve dramatically.

If we moved now to the "two child family" and concurrently brought immigration under control at an annual level of 200,000, it would lead in the next century to the population projection shown in the graph *(Line B)*.

By the middle of the next century parents could even be encouraged to have more children, for a total fertility rate of 1.9 *(Line TFR)*. That rate would allow our nation to maintain a constant population size of around 150 million.

If, at the same time, we change our lifestyles to reduce unnecessary consumption, and use energy and materials far more efficiently, such a population size should be sustainable for the very long term.

## The Choice Is Ours

We need to choose the path leading to a sustainable U.S. population of around 150 million. To get there we would need the combination of the two child family and a moderate net immigration of 200,000 a year. What would be so difficult about that?

We need, above all, the courage to make now the decisions that would safeguard our demographic future. We urge Third World nations to bite the bullet and face up to their demographic problems. How about doing it ourselves?

---

*NPG has recently published a paper titled, The Two Child Family, documenting the case made here. To become a member, and receive our papers on a regular basis, please send us your check today.*

*We are a nonprofit, national membership organization established in 1972. Contributions to NPG are tax deductible to the extent the law allows.*

Yes, I want to become a member of NPG, and help you work towards a smaller U.S. population. I am enclosing my check for annual membership dues.

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Mail to: **Negative Population Growth, Inc.**
210 The Plaza, P.O. Box 1206, Teaneck, NJ 07666

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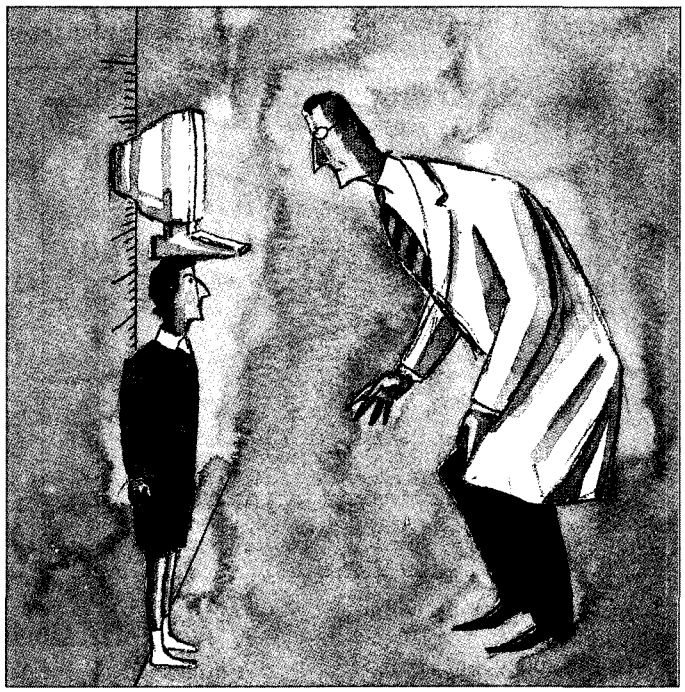
might well not have a paper counterpart. There was barely an objection from the audience.

Publishers are divided over the fate of so-called "soft reference titles"—cookbooks and how-to books—and children's books. These are huge markets, and the question is whether electronic books will capture them or expand on them. "My generation may be the last . . . to have a strong visceral affection for books," Janet Wikler, a former director of advanced media at HarperCollins, told *Publishers Weekly* last year.

What publishers have not stopped to consider is whether consumers like CD-ROMs in the first place—or how comfortable they will ever be with networked, digitalized, downloaded books when they become available. It may be a question of technical proficiency: how many families possess the sophistication to use Microsoft's new CD-ROM Musical Instruments—a charming visual and audio tour of the instruments of the world which is perfect for six-year-olds? The product requires either a multimedia computer or "a Multimedia PC upgrade kit, which includes CD-ROM drive (with CD-DA outputs, sustained 150K/second transfer rate and a maximum seek time of 1 second while using no more than 40% of the CPU's processing power)." Electronic encyclopedias have all but driven print encyclopedias out of the market in large part because they are "bundled"—sold at a deep discount to computer-hardware manufacturers to be included free when the consumer buys a CD-ROM drive. This is roughly like giving the consumer a book if he will only buy a lamp. "Traditional publishers may be a Luddite elite, but software publishers are arrogant sheep," says Michael Mellin, a multimedia executive who until last year was the publisher of Random House's electronic-publishing division. "One thing publishers don't realize is that there hasn't been a comparable kick in sales of CD-ROM multimedia titles given the rise in the number of CD-ROM drives installed." In other words, books on CD-ROM don't sell—at least not yet. A study of the industry last year found that of those people who had bought a CD-ROM drive, fewer than half had returned to the computer store to buy new discs. Compare this with the way the compact-disc player caught on in the mid-1980s. Interactive multimedia may turn out to be the biggest bust since the paperless office. One former industry executive describes multimedia as "a solution in search of a problem, doing what other things do already, only slightly less well."



Publishers derive their impressions of the awesome potential of multimedia from products like Microsoft's much publicized Encarta CD-ROM, a magnificent encyclopedia with text drawn from Funk & Wagnall's twenty-nine-volume encyclopedia and augmented by hundreds of video and audio clips. Alice would have fun with this: she could listen to bird calls and African drums, or experiment with changing the moon's orbit. (She could also click on Bill Gates's name and hear his nasal assurance that Microsoft "has never wavered from the vision" of a personal computer "on every desk and in every home." This was not part of Funk & Wagnall's original text.) But having been five years in development, employing a hundred people at its peak, and reportedly costing Microsoft well upward of $5 million, Encarta may be something of a Potemkin Village, meant for credulous competitors to marvel at. The company has dropped the price from $395 to $139 to try to get consumers to buy it.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF THE COMPUTER

PAPER has limitations, but the computer may have more. As a physical object, it is hardly comforting. "Who'd want to go to bed with a Powerbook?" John Baker, a vice-president at Broderbund, asks. And even if the laptop goes on shrinking, its screen, whose components represent nearly all the machine's cost, remains at best a chore to read. At the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (where the receptionist's cubicle still houses an IBM Selectric typewriter) is a display room with half a dozen prototype six-million-pixel AMLCD screens. The quiet hum of the room, the bright white lighting, the clean, flat antiseptic surfaces, give the impression of an aspirin commercial. "It was clear to us that no reader was going to read a book off any of the current screens for more than ten minutes," says Malcolm Thompson, the chief technologist. "We hoped to change that." A large annotated poster on the wall illustrates point for point the screen's superiority to paper, as in an old-fashioned magazine ad. This flat panel display is indeed better than commercial screens, but it is neither as flexible nor as mobile as a book, and it still depends on fickle battery power. A twentysomething software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marketer who began as an editorial assistant in book publishing points out, "A book requires one good eye, one good light source, and one good finger."

## LOST IN CYBERSPACE

IN the heart of official Washington, D.C., down the street from the Capitol and at the same intersection as the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress, stands an incongruous statue of Puck, whom the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, soon to be issued on CD-ROM, defines as "a goblin," and whom Microsoft Encarta passes over in favor of "puck," which it defines solely as a mouselike device with crosshairs printed on it, used in engineering applications. The 1930s building next to the statue is the Folger Shakespeare Library. Two flights below the reading room, designed in the style of a Tudor banquet hall, next to which librarians and scholars click quietly on laptops and log on to the Internet's Shaksper reference group for the latest scholarly chatter, is a locked bank gate. Behind it is what librarians call a "short-title catalogue vault"—in other words, a very-rare-book room. This main room—there is another—is rectangular, carpeted in red, and kept permanently at 68 degrees. Sprinkler valves are interspersed among eight evenly spaced shelves of books dating from 1475 to 1640 and lit by harsh institutional light. Of these books 180 are the only copies of their titles left in the world: you can spot them by the small blue slips reading "Unique" which modestly poke out from their tops. At the end of the room is a long shelf on which stacks of oversize volumes rest on their sides: these are nearly a third of the surviving First Folio editions of the plays of William Shakespeare. When the First Folios were printed, in the 1620s, printing was still an inexact art. Each page had to be checked by hand, and the volumes are full of mistakes: backward type, ill-cut pages, and variant lines. Several copies lack the 1602 tragedy *Troilus and Cressida*, owing to a copyright dispute. And yet, 370 years after they came off the printing press, you can still pull down these books and read them. The pages are often lightly cockled and foxed, because the folio was printed on mid-priced rag paper, but the type is still bright and the volume falls open easily. You can balance it on your lap and run your finger along the page to feel the paper grain in that sensuous gesture known to centuries of book readers: here is knowledge.

In 1620 Francis Bacon ranked printing, along with gunpowder and the compass, as one of the three inventions that had "changed the appearance and state of the whole world." Indeed, the existence of multiple identical copies of texts that are nearly indelibly recorded, permanently retrievable, and widely decipherable has determined so much of modern history that what the world would be like without printing can only be guessed at. More books likely came into existence in the fifty years after the Gutenberg Bible than in the millennium that preceded it. "Printing was a huge change for Western culture," says Paul Saffo, who studies the effect of technology on society at the Institute for the Future, in Menlo Park (where the receptionist also uses an IBM Selectric). "The dominant intellectual skill before the age of print was the art of memory." And now we may be going back.

For the question may not be whether, given enough time, CD-ROMs and the Internet can replace books, but whether they should. Ours is a culture that has made a fetish of impermanence. Paperbacks disintegrate, Polaroids fade, video images wear out. Perhaps the first novel ever written specifically to be read on a computer and to take advantage of the concept of hypertext—the structuring of written passages to allow the reader to take different paths through the story—was Rob Swigart's *Portal*, published in 1986 and designed for the Apple Macintosh, among other computers of its day. The Apple Macintosh was superseded months later by the more sophisticated Macintosh SE, which, according to Swigart, could not run his hypertext novel. Over time people threw out their old computers (fewer and fewer new programs could be run on them), and so *Portal* became for the most part unreadable. A similar fate will befall literary works of the future if they are committed not to paper but to transitional technology like diskettes, CD-ROMs, and Unix tapes—candidates, with eight-track tapes, Betamax, and the Apple Macintosh, for rapid obscurity. "It's not clear, with fifty incompatible standards around, what will survive," says Ted Nelson, the computer pioneer, who has grown disenchanted with the forces commercializing the Internet. "The so-called information age is really the age of information lost." Software companies don't care—early moviemakers didn't worry that they were filming on volatile stock. In a graphic dramatization of this mad dash to obsolescence, in 1992 the author William Gibson, who coined the term "cyberspace," created an autobiographical story on computer disc called "Agrippa." "Agrippa" is encoded to erase itself entirely as the purchaser plays the story. Only thirty-five copies were printed, and those who bought it left it intact. One copy was somehow pirated and sent out onto the Internet, where anyone could copy it. Many users did, but who and where is not consistently indexed, nor are the copies permanent—the Internet is anarchic. "The original disc is already almost obsolete on Macintoshes," says Kevin Begos, the publisher of "Agrippa." "Within four or five years it will get very hard to find a machine that will run it." Collectors will soon find Gibson's story gone before they can destroy it themselves.


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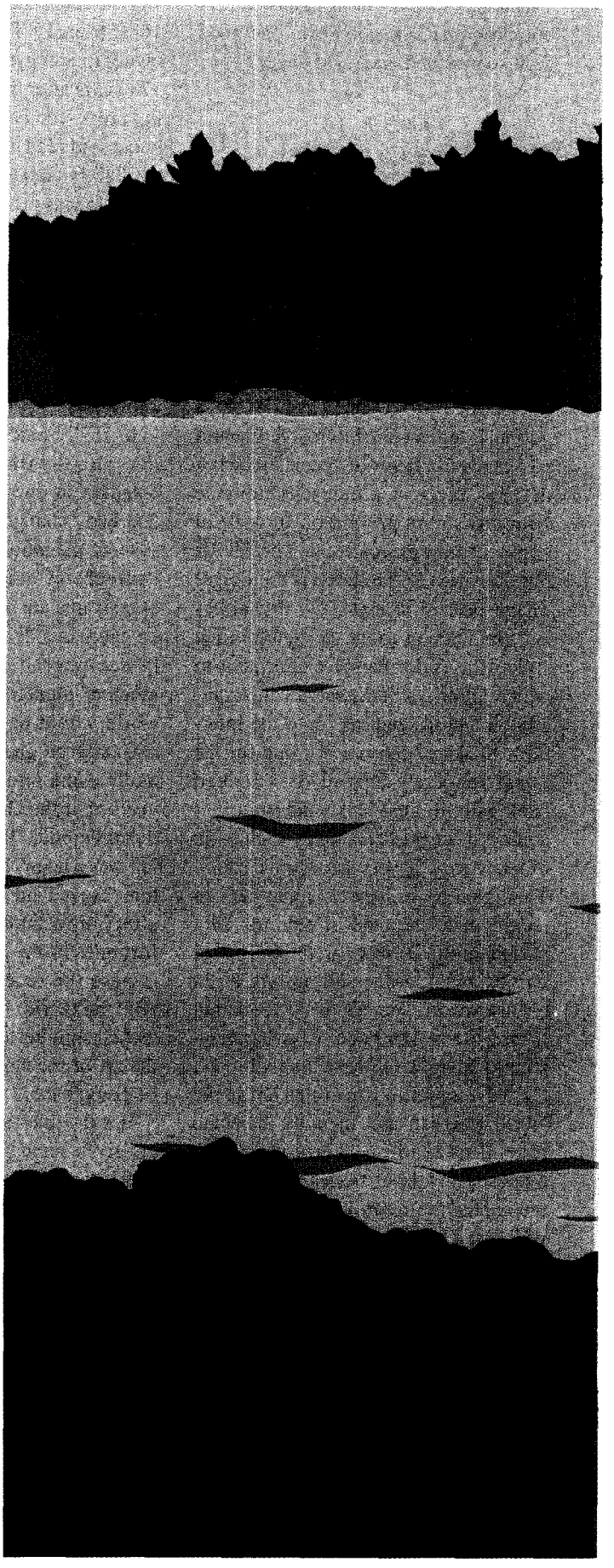
# Leaving Home

*by* ROXANA ROBINSON



EVERY summer when I was growing up, we made the long drive from outside Philadelphia, where I was born, to the village of Devon, in western Massachusetts, where my father's family had lived for a hundred and fifty years.

The small road to Devon turned off a larger one along the Manitoonic River, dropping suddenly down the riverbank and then leveling abruptly to cross an ancient covered bridge. Our car bumped sedately as it entered the bridge, which was dark inside, with huge crisscrossed beams. Going slowly and majestically through the nineteenth-century gloom, we could hear the hollow wooden echo of our passage.

This ceremonial crossing of the river was the moment I waited for. When we came out of the dark tunnel of the bridge, I said contentedly, "Now we're in Devon."

"Now we're in Devon," my father always answered.

We drove up Devon's one steep street, over the railroad tracks, and past the small, neat shops that my grandmother had used: Bates the butcher, the dry-goods shop, the grocery store.

"Wallace's is closed," my mother said. The grocery store was always closed by the time we got to Devon.

"We can stop at the farm for eggs and milk," my father said.

The afternoon had, in a stroke, turned bleak and endless. Everything she had built up, all the teenagedness, whatever borrowed glamour she had managed to acquire, was about to be destroyed



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Illustration by Glenna Lang



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The farm belonged to Cousin Thomas, who was the only Thatcher still farming. Four generations ago the family had split: Thomas's great-grandfather had stayed in Devon, and my father's great-grandfather had moved to Boston. Thomas's line had stayed farmers, and the men in my father's line all went to Harvard. They were Episcopalian ministers, like my father, and judges and teachers and lawyers. Now the Thatchers lived all over the Northeast, but they had kept the family land and the family houses. The cousins, more distant with each generation, still came to Devon in the summers.

Cousin Thomas's farm was at the foot of Devon Hill. Two big gloomy hemlocks stood along the road, and there was a pond below the house for a flock of bossy gray geese. The house was white clapboard, symmetrical in front, with square pillars and a deep and generous front porch. In back the house meandered, with lopsided additions. It had been built around 1800, and now, in 1965, the shutters sagged, the clapboards showed cracks, and it needed paint.

We pulled into the driveway, next to the house. A flock of bantams with shaggy boots fussed in the weeds.

"Coming in with me?" My father turned sideways to talk to me; I was in the back seat. I could see his Thatcher nose, pointed and severe, his pale blue Thatcher eyes and limp blond Thatcher hair. I have Thatcher looks, like his, and when I was little, I liked this. I liked people saying, "Well, I can see *you're* a Thatcher." All this made me feel a part of something larger than myself, part of a gentle tribe, a network that was invisibly spread across these Massachusetts hills. But the year I was thirteen, looking like a Thatcher made me uneasy. Looking in the mirror, I felt like a fraud, as though I were wearing a Thatcher mask I couldn't take off. I looked like a Thatcher, but I knew in my heart I was not one.

The Thatcher family was famous for integrity: those judges, headmasters, ministers, were all high-minded and principled. They were models of rectitude. The Thatcher genes carried not just blue eyes but virtue, and when I was thirteen, I had become aware that I was deeply deficient in virtue.

My mother turned and smiled at me over the back seat. My mother wore round flesh-colored glasses, which made her eyes pale and vulnerable. She had straight brown hair, very fine, held to one side with one bobby pin. She never wore makeup. Her clothes were unworldly: baggy woven skirts, sturdy comfortable sandals, limp tan cardigan sweaters. Appearances did not matter to my parents; the material world was unimportant. I knew that I ought to feel this way too; I wished that I felt this way, but I did not. When I was thirteen, I was deeply, and shamefully, concerned with appearances.

"Go in with Daddy," my mother said, smiling. "You always do."

But that year I didn't want to go into the farmhouse with my father, though I didn't know why. Avoiding my mother's eye, I looked out the window at the dense green sea of corn rising up Devon Hill.

"Maybe Cousin Gloria will be there." My mother offered me the cousin closest to my age, but I didn't answer. My mother said kindly, "Go on. Don't be shy."

This sounded condescending, and I said crossly, "I'm not *shy*."

"Then what is it?" my mother asked.

Another silence.

"Sounds like shy to me," my father said, brisk and certain. My father was certain about everything. "Better come in."

"I'm *not* shy," I said again, crosser. "I don't want to go in, that's all. I don't *care* if Gloria is there. I don't care about *Gloria*. I *hate* Gloria."

And now a terrible silence filled the car. I had spoken a word that was never used in our household. The sound of it hung in the air—the short, explosive syllable, with its fierce aspirate beginning, the powerful black vowel at its center, and the sharp closure, like a hissed threat. The shock of it quivered among us. It was as though I had thrown a rock through the windshield and we now sat staring at the star-shaped fracture, the damage.

My mother gave a long sigh, her face sorrowful. "I hope that's not true, Alison," she said quietly. She sounded wounded, as though I had struck her in the face, and I knew that was how she felt. "I hope you don't really *hate* your cousin."

Another boiling silence followed. With my brutality I had betrayed my mother and disgusted my father. My father looked straight ahead now, the back of his neck rigid. My mother watched me, full of concern. They waited for me to answer.

I looked out the window. I couldn't now retrieve the word, which I had never meant to say in the first place. The word had come out before I thought, and now I would have to pay. I had no defense, no excuses. I never did. I could never argue with my parents: they lived in a moral universe separate from mine. They never swore, or spoke unkindly, or had uncharitable thoughts. My parents were guided by virtue.

I sat in the back seat and wished that God, for once, would take my side and erase the sound of the word from family memory. I told myself that it was just a word, but I was without conviction. I stared out at the jostling sea of green corn, waiting.

In the front seat my mother sighed again. She said gravely, "What is it that you 'hate' your cousin *for*?"

I didn't hate Gloria. I hardly knew Gloria.

The farming Thatchers had five children: two boys, Tom and Charlie, and three girls, Gloria, Karen, and Joanne. I hardly ever saw them. I spent the summers at the tiny club down at the lake, with its two soggy red-clay tennis courts and old shingle-sided boathouse. The farming Thatchers didn't go to the club. Their children were never seen fooling around out on the rafts, or playing tennis on the bumpy


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courts, or sitting on the club's muddy beach with sandwiches and soft drinks. Tom and Charlie, in blue overalls, spent their days on slow, thundering tractors, cutting hay and ploughing fields, lifting a laconic hand if someone waved from a passing car. I don't know where the girls were, but it wasn't down at the lake.

"I didn't mean I really *hated* Gloria," I said slowly.

My father turned sideways again. "Then maybe you should not have used that word, Alison." He did not, of course, say the word himself. "That word is very strong," he said. "You should think carefully before you use it. If you don't mean it—and I hope you didn't—then it's not a word you should use." He paused. "I hope you don't really feel that emotion toward your own cousin."

I didn't answer. I stared out the window again so that I wouldn't have to look at my mother. My mother, her eyes shining through the colorless glasses, watched me steadily. She was ready to forgive me.

We fell again into silence. I knew what would happen. If I didn't answer, if I didn't admit to my crime, we would sit here in silence for the rest of the evening, for the rest of my life. The black sound of the word I had used would hover over us forever. I closed my eyes. The weight of this bore relentlessly down on me.

"I'm sorry," I said.

My father nodded slowly, without looking at me. His face was bleak, and frozen by disapproval. His mouth was drawn in on itself, and his pale-blue eyes were hooded and distant, as though I were someone he had never met. Hours would pass before he approached friendship, even acquaintanceship. My mother leaned across the car and patted my shoulder. She gave me a brave smile, but her eyes showed damage. She had been wounded by my savage behavior.

"I'm going in," my father said. His voice was remote. He got out and shut the door.

I looked sideways at my mother, who nodded urgently at me. She waved me toward the door. I waited a moment, for pride, and then got out.

MY father stood in the rutted driveway, taking a deep breath of Devon air. I moved tentatively next to him, and he turned away, stepping up onto the side porch. A clothesline hung above the railing, wooden pins staggering along its length. I could hear a radio inside the house, and a trashy singer yearning to a sunset-colored melody.

My parents listened only to classical music. Once, in the car, I was rolling the dial along the radio band. I stopped it at a popular-music station, just for a second, as though I were pausing to shift my grip on the dial. Suddenly a hot red blare of sound filled the car, and my father reached over and clicked the radio off. He looked straight ahead, his mouth closed and tight. He didn't say anything. I didn't dare turn the radio back on, even for the news.

My father's footsteps thundered on the porch floor, and I heard chairs scraping inside. We went into the dark mudroom, where a mud-colored dog blanket, flattened and hairy, lay in one corner. Faded jackets hung on the wall; tipped-over rubber boots sprawled on the floor below them. My father raised his hand to knock, and the kitchen door opened.

"Well, if it isn't Cousin James," Cousin Florence said, her bold, dark eyes seizing on my father. Cousin Florence stood outlined in the doorway. She was thick everywhere: across her high aproned belly, through her pale ankles, and through her powerful upper arms, which she now clasped. She folded her arms and tilted her head cheerfully to one side. Her round face was flat and red, and her brown hair stood in a wild halo around her face.

"Hello, James," Cousin Thomas said, stepping forward and smiling. Cousin Thomas's nose was Thatcher, as were his cheekbones, but he was half a foot shorter than my father, his body small and dense. His denim overalls were loose and waistless, like a clown's suit.

Thomas hugged his elbows, but my father put out his hand. Thomas unclasped himself and they shook hands slowly, smiling at each other. Cousin Thomas turned and grinned at me.

"Well, come on in," he said, amused and pleased, and waved us past. The mudroom smelled rank, but I took a deep breath before I stepped into the kitchen.

In the middle of the kitchen was a table covered with red-and-white-checked oilcloth. Battered wooden chairs stood unevenly around it: in two of them sat girls. I saw them out of the corner of my eye. I stood with my head tilted to one side, my eyes fixed on my father's face as though I had to read his lips.

The farming Thatchers had dinner early, and we had arrived in the middle. Food filled the plates, and in the center of the table stood a pie-shaped piece of yellow cheese. The cheese was sweating, and two flies moved thoughtfully over its fissured yellow surface. The room had a dense, powerful smell, and when my deep breath gave out, I opened my mouth slightly, to breathe.

"Come sit down, James," Florence said. She stood in front of the stove, her solid white arms cocked on her hips. She wore thin white socks, limp around her ankles, and her brown oxfords had a dull pale bloom of scuff at the toes.

My father smiled gently. "I'm afraid we can't, Florence. Diana's out in the car, and we're meeting Ted at the house. He doesn't have a key, so I'm afraid he's waiting there. And it looks as though we're interrupting your dinner, so we won't bother you any more than to ask for a few eggs and some milk. We'll bring the can back in the morning."

"A few eggs," Cousin Florence said. She moved to a table where a wide cracked bowl stood. It was heaped with brown eggs, bits of feather stuck to them. "How many is a few?" Florence asked my father, twisting to eye him.

"Oh, two, I suppose," my father said, not sure.


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"Six," I had to prompt him, in a whisper. My brother, Ted, loved eggs.

He looked down at me. "Six?"

I nodded and he repeated it to Florence.

Florence looked at us and shook her head, grinning.

"Sure now? Six? Or two?" she said.

My father smiled. "Six," he said, nodding. Florence turned again and began to count eggs into a wrinkled brown bag. "Gloria, get the milk," she said, her voice suddenly peremptory. The older girl slid off her chair, staring at me. Joanne, the youngest, in pajamas and a turquoise bathrobe, sat at the table, watching. Her curly hair was in a fine tangle, and she held a comic book, forbidden in our house.

"Give them the can," Florence ordered.

Gloria went to the old-fashioned, high-legged refrigerator. She took out a tall, silvery milk can and carried it carefully to my father, ignoring me. Gloria had Cousin Florence's round face and her restless dark eyes. Her elbows were sharp. She wore a cheap lace-edged blouse, yellowed and tattered, and baggy jeans. As she passed me, I breathed in a close, fleshy smell.

"That be enough milk?" Florence asked loudly. This was meant as a joke: the can was so full that Gloria could hardly carry it.

"I think it will be just fine," my father said, polite.

Gloria came and stood directly in front of me, too close, invasive.

"Hi," she said. She lifted her chin suddenly and scratched under it.

"Hello," I said coolly.

Cousin Florence held the bag of eggs out to me.

"Don't forget the eggs," she said energetically. "All two of them. Or was it six?" She laughed again, staccato. She looked at me more closely and frowned.

"Happened to your hair? Caught in the mowing machine?" She looked at my father and then back at me. My father smiled.

I said, "I had it cut."

Cousin Florence laughed briefly. "I can see *that*."

"Well, thank you very much, Cousin Florence," my father said, "Thomas." He bowed his head. "And you all are well? The boys? The farm?"

"Pretty good," Cousin Thomas said. Thomas had a nice smile, small and true. He put his hands comfortably inside the bib of his overalls, as if it were a muff. "Things are pretty good. I can't complain. And you?"

"We're pretty good ourselves." My father nodded goofily, like a marionette. "Well, thank you again for all this," my father said, holding up the milk can, nodding at the eggs. "I'll bring the can back tomorrow."

Cousin Florence flapped her hand at him. "Don't worry about it," she said. "Children can bring it back. Right, sister?" She stared at me again.

"Come at milking," Thomas said, smiling at me.

"Thank you," I said, smiling stiffly back. I knew he meant this as a treat, and when I was little, it had been one. But now what I remembered was the row of dirty-haunched Holsteins with their slimy noses, the concrete gutter behind them clotted with green manure, the heavy-bodied flies everywhere.

When we were back in the car, my mother asked, "How are they all?"

"They were fine," my father said, backing the car out of the driveway. Our house was at the top of the next hill; we would be home in minutes. "Thomas was cheerful. He always is."

"He's a good-hearted man," my mother said. "So is Florence. I hope she didn't give you all their milk. She'll never tell you that she needs any for herself."

"I wonder if she did do that," my father said, slowing the car down. "I wonder if she gave us all their milk. Maybe we should go back."

I sat in the back seat, the cold milk can against my chest. It was freezing, and I could feel the milk sloshing back and forth inside. I closed my eyes, hoping that my father's conscience would not demand that he go back to the farm and reopen negotiations.

"Did she just give you the can from the fridge?" my mother asked. "Did they pour any off into a pitcher?"

"No," my father said. "They gave us the whole can." He turned the car in at a driveway to turn around. We set off back up the hill to the farm again. This time I didn't go in.

OUR house in Devon was built by my grandfather. It was massive and rustic, with rough, dark-stained clapboards. Huge stone chimneys guarded each end of the roof, and clusters of tiny-paned windows huddled in groups under the eaves.

Ted was waiting for us on the front porch, his knapsack beside him. He had hitchhiked here. Ted always hitchhiked, not in a dashing, carefree, gypsy way but in an ascetic, puritanical way, as though he disapproved of the comfort and expense of other kinds of travel. My father shook Ted's hand and my mother hugged him. I stood off to one side, and when Ted was finished with our parents, he turned toward me and I lifted my hand in an awkward wave.

"Hi there," Ted said. He was eight years older than I was, serious and remote. He talked very little, and practically never to me. He was going to be a concert pianist, and he practiced six hours a day. While he played, his mouth went down at the corners, like my father's. I was afraid of Ted: I knew he disapproved of me. I knew that he could tell that I was vain and selfish, superficial, brutal—a false Thatcher.

While the others unloaded the car, I opened the house. This meant unlocking the back door from the outside and the front door from the inside. I always wanted to be the first person to enter the house in the summer. Carrying the key, I


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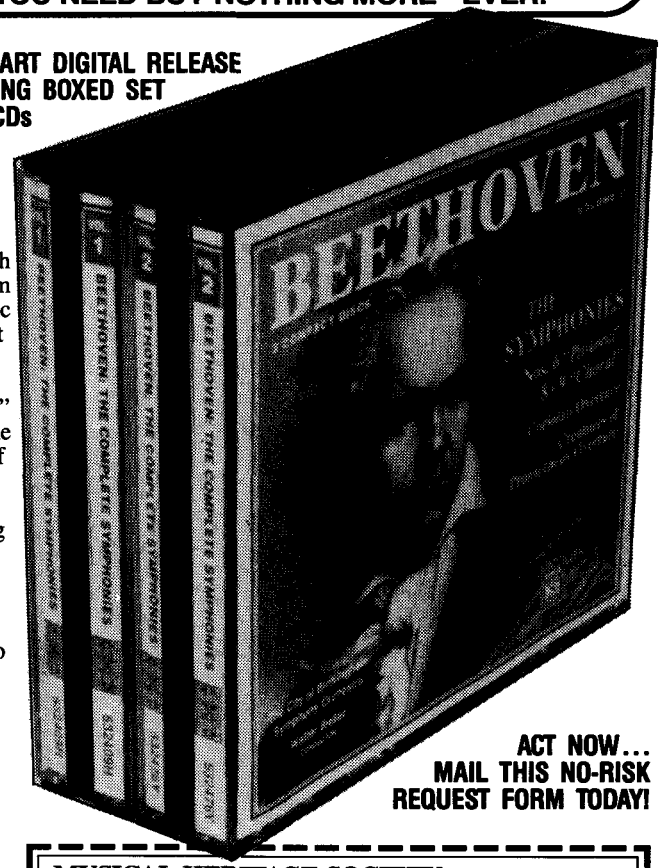


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ran through the summer twilight. My bare feet knew the long springy grass of the unmowed lawn, the narrow rocky path down the side of the house, the splintery gray steps up to the back porch. The woods came right up to the back porch, and at night the raccoons made their secretive way up the steps to the scraps left out for them.

I set the key into the heavy lock, twisted, and pushed open the door. The kitchen was cool and gloomy, deeply silent. The refrigerator door stood open, declaring its metal racks empty. The big green back-porch rockers sat tipsily on top of one another in an uproarious still life. In the dark pantry glass-fronted cupboards rose up to the ceiling, stacked with my grandmother's fluted white Wedgwood china. The rooms smelled, as they always did, of wood and wax. After the pantry's gloom the dining room was a burst of light, with its pale, shining birchwood floor, its long wall of French doors facing the lake. In the living room the huge, blackened granite fireplace was flanked by oak bookcases. An iron cauldron stood to one side, for firewood. Facing the hearth were overstuffed chairs in baggy slipcovers and a faded chintz sofa. The house was unchanged since my grandmother had arranged it.

My bare feet made no sound on the polished floors, and moving through the silent rooms, I felt as though I were walking into the dense center of my family. I was breathing air that my family had breathed, my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, my cousins, my father. I was seeing the same images—these same chairs in their baggy slipcovers, these old china lamps, this Toby jug on the mantelpiece—that my family had seen each summer for generations.

Usually I liked this moment. Usually I felt as though I were somehow swimming into my own past, as though the whole liquid, transparent past of my family enveloped me, warm, comforting, nourishing. But this time the house felt strange. The air seemed heavy, and the rooms felt claustrophobic. I went straight to the front door without stopping, and when I unlocked the door and pulled open the heavy slab of oak, I stood still in the doorway, facing out of the house. The cool evening air, smelling of ferns and woods, swept into the house like a blessing.

The next morning I went, early, down to the lake. The air was fresh and minty, and the narrow downhill path through the birches was soft and padded with leaf mold. The wooden boathouse was empty, and the floor echoed hollowly beneath my heels. I walked out onto the deck and took a slow breath, looking around. The lake, ringed by low wooded hills, was calm and light-filled. I could smell the weathered, sunbaked planks beneath my feet. The air was still, and I heard no sounds anywhere. In the middle of the lake, far out on the shimmering water, two fishermen sat motionless in a flat-bottomed rowboat. A filmy white mist traced the green shoreline. I walked to the edge of the deck and looked down: the water was yellow-green and translucent. A narrow fish hovered over the sandy bottom, its fins rippling like transparent flags. The early sun was warm on my bare legs, and I sat down between the stiff wooden arms of the ladder. I closed my eyes; I could feel the summer about to begin.

BY the weekend I had met everyone my age who was there that year. Calvin Edgerley, fourteen, whom I knew, was staying with his grandmother. This year Calvin's older cousin was there too, Trowbridge Small. And one afternoon we rode our bicycles over to see Betsy Jordan, whom the boys knew.

The Jordans' house was new. It was low and sleek, made of brick. Betsy's mother opened the wide white-painted door. She had short blonde hair, curled, and she wore a flowered terrycloth shift with ruffled edges.

"Hi, kids, come on in," she said cheerfully. "Betsy's here somewhere." She called behind her, "Betsy!" She turned back and smiled at us. Her lips were clear curves of raspber-

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ry. "She's doing her summer reading, so she'll be thrilled to see you."

Betsy Jordan was wearing blue-jean cutoffs and a tank top. She held a book negligently in her hand, a finger stuck between the pages. Betsy was short and rounded, with neat limbs and easy gestures. Her face was covered with dark freckles and her hair was sleek, like an otter's. She was completely relaxed, and I could see that she knew, just by instinct, how to be. I stared at her with admiration. At once I felt myself too lanky, long-boned, wrong.

"Hi," Betsy said. "Want something to drink?"

In the kitchen we got Cokes, which were forbidden in our house. We went back to sit in the living room, and I looked around. We sat on built-in sofas covered in bright-red jittery prints. In front of the sofas were low glass tables with metal frames. The floor was covered with a white wall-to-wall rug, thick, like the fur of an animal. On the shiny white shelves against the wall were a stereo system and a huge television set. The white-brick fireplace was raised off the floor. All of this seemed perfect to me, exactly the way a house should be.

Trow, in tattered blue jeans, his hair falling across his eyes, sat next to Betsy. He leaned against her shoulder and pointed at her book.

"So, whatchou up to, Bets?" he asked.

"*Villette*," Betsy said mournfully. "Brontë."

"Like it?" Trow asked, grinning.

Betsy snorted lackadaisically and shook her head slowly. "Hate it," she said. "*Hate* it." She used the word casually, as though it were no different from any other.

"Wait'll you get *Middlemarch*," Trow said, raising his eyebrows, grinning. He shook his head. "Woo-woo!"

"*Middlemarch*," Betsy said, wrinkling her nose. "Please. We read that last year. I hated it, too."

I listened admiringly. At home I went to a church school, and no one talked like this. My parents did not allow complaints about schoolwork.

"What do you have?" Calvin asked me. Calvin had a long comic's nose, pale skin, and fine dark hair.

"*Walden*," I said.

"Henry David Thoreau-up," said Calvin, and laughed loudly.

"Where do you go?" Betsy asked me.

"Farmington," I said, proud. "I start this fall. Where do you?"

"Concord Academy," Betsy said, and I nodded knowledgeably.

They were all older than I was, and already at boarding school. They told me elaborately how terrible it was. I listened, entranced. I could not imagine what it would be like. I was hoping for a new life, coarse and raucous: loud radios, friends who swore. I hoped we would all laugh behind the housemother's back uncharitably, without remorse.

Sitting on the jazzy red sofa, with a Coke bottle in my hand, listening to them criticize the grown-up world, I was proud. I thought we looked like a photograph of teenagers in a magazine. This was what teenagers did, I thought, and I myself was doing it. I was one of them, a member of this elect and glamorous group.

Of course, I knew that there were things I had to conceal from them, things that would reveal me as an impostor. For one thing, I liked to read. I had already read the Brontës, on my own, and I liked the books on the summer reading list. For another thing, my house was hideous, unacceptably old, and my family was unacceptably virtuous. But I thought that I could keep my two worlds apart, that I could keep these things hidden. In the meantime here I was, sitting in this golden group, holding a Coke. Two boys sat next to me, clowning. Betsy rolled her eyes languidly, and the boys laughed. I felt I had entered a charmed land, and that I had never been so happy. I thought my new life had already started.

LATER in the month I lay one afternoon in the big canvas hammock on the porch. I was reading *Walden*, and from time to time I put my hand underneath the hammock and gave myself a peaceful push against the stone parapet. Below me the wooded hillside was quiet, and the lake was calm. Far out in the middle a single figure was paddling slowly in a silver canoe.

When I heard the knock on the front door, I stopped reading, wondering. No car had come up the hill. My mother's footsteps crossed the polished floor.

"Why, *hello*!" my mother said to someone, effusive. "Come right in."

I heard a muffled, unidentifiable voice.

"She's right outside," my mother said. "Come with me. She'll be so glad to see you."

I sat up, appalled. I was wearing stained green shorts and an old, too-tight jersey. Worse, I was here in the house: the huge, blackened fireplace, the humped, flowered, monolithic chairs, the faded Oriental rugs, the absent television. No Cokes were in the refrigerator, nor had Cokes ever been. I was caught, trapped, in these clothes and in this house.

"Alison," my mother called, "you have a guest."

The screen door opened and Gloria stood there, a bundle in her arms.

"I come to play," she announced, and smiled, showing her flat front teeth.

I stared at her.

"I brought my bathing suit," Gloria added, holding up the bundle.

"Good," my mother said brightly, looking at me. "That's good. You can go down to the lake together for a swim. How about that, Alison?"

I was speechless.

The afternoon had, in a stroke, turned bleak and endless. Hours and hours lay before me, locked in Gloria's company.


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I would have to talk to Gloria. I would have to listen. And Gloria's presence, I knew, would ruin me. Everything I had built up, all the teenagedness, whatever borrowed glamour I had managed to acquire from the group, would be destroyed by Gloria's presence. My true colors would be revealed, and I could never recover from this. Even if no one saw me, even if no one knew, a contamination would take place. I would be subtly expelled. The others would make plans, they would do things together, and they would not call me. They would expect me to spend the day with Gloria. It was the end of my new life.

Gloria looked diffidently at my mother. "Ma says I'm not to go to the boathouse, because it costs you. She says we can go down into the woods."

My mother looked awkward. "Oh," she said, blinking behind the colorless glasses. "Oh, that doesn't matter. Don't worry about that."

"No," Gloria said firmly, shaking her head. "Ma says I have to swim from the woods. I can't go to the boathouse."

After a pause my mother nodded. "All right. A path on our property goes down to the lake." She thought for a moment. "How old are you, Gloria?"

"Nearly twelve," Gloria said, proud.

I would be spending the afternoon with an eleven-year-old.

"And are you a good swimmer?" my mother asked.

"Not real good," Gloria said cheerfully.

"All right, then," my mother said. "Ted can go down with the two of you. Just to be on the safe side. He can take a book. The two of you can swim." She stood, smiling, surrounding us with warmth and approval.

Where would we swim?, I wondered bitterly. Back and forth in the shallows, trying not to touch the muddy, squishy, loathsome, monster-filled bottom? By this time our side of the lake was in shadow, and the water would be chill. And the bank offered no clearing, nowhere to spread a towel, nowhere to sit but on nettles. Ted would be no help; he would bring his book and say nothing.

We changed into bathing suits in my room. Gloria's suit was babyish, with smocking across the front and rows of ruffles across her rump. We went down the path, I in front. "The briers are bad this year," I called back in a grand way. I was trying to suggest some kind of superior knowledge, a connoisseurship of briers. I hoped Ted would answer, but Gloria did.

"Yee-ah," she said. She giggled loudly, and then screamed as a thorn ripped a white line along her arm. "Ow," she said. I turned onto the faint trail down to our landing. The briers were worse here. Behind me Gloria shouted good-naturedly at each hostile touch.

At the water's edge we put our towels down on bushes. Ted, who didn't care, sat down with his book among the brush.

"I'll go first," I said. I began to wade cautiously out into the cool water. Goose bumps appeared suddenly, up and down my arms. The lake bottom was famously awful, and cold black ooze came up between my toes. I stepped on slime-covered rocks, slippery and unsteady. I kept my head down, trying to see into the sunless green depths.

Behind me Gloria screamed loudly with every step. "Oh, my God," she said, over and over.

When the water reached my waist, I looked up. The silver canoe I had seen before was coming in from the middle of the lake. It was a new aluminum one, with a girl paddling. It was headed past us, toward the boathouse. The girl paddling wore a smart black tank suit, like Betsy's.

I started walking more steadily through the cobbly ooze, pushing urgently through the water toward the canoe. The girl paddling was watching me. She slowed her stroke and slightly changed her course. As she came closer, I could see the flicked-up nose, the sleek wet head. It was Betsy.

I waved at her, lurching, trying to hurry through the heavy water. I could hear Gloria, now way behind me, shrieking in the shallow water.

"Betsy!" I called.

Betsy paused, her paddle lifted. Out where she was, the lake was still lit by the late-afternoon light. The canoe was radiant on the glassy water, and long silver loops slid off the paddle.

"Betsy! It's me!" I called. "Alison!"

I threw myself forward into the water and began swimming. Betsy hesitated and then turned the canoe toward me with a long, strong stroke that sent the boat skidding across the water. I swam toward her, flailing my arms and splashing wildly. When I reached the canoe, I kicked myself up out of the water in a flurry, reaching for the gunwale. I grabbed it as though I were drowning, as though I were desperate and the canoe were a lifeboat.

"Go," I said urgently. "Just go. Quick."

Without asking, Betsy began paddling again. The canoe, clumsy with my awkward weight, swung back away from shore and headed for the boathouse. I clung to its cold, pale side and stared at the normal life going on at the boathouse: the bored lifeguard lounging in his canvas chair, his white hat pulled down over his eyes; small children shouting in the shallows.

I didn't once look behind me, where Ted would be sitting among the bushes, his head now raised from his book, watching me, unsurprised. I didn't look back to see Gloria, who would be standing in the muddy shallows, quiet, no longer shrieking, staring at her cousin. Hanging on to the smooth, chill metal, my teeth chattering, I fixed my gaze ahead, as though I could put my family behind me forever, as though I would never have to look at them again.


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# Noël Coward and Laurence Olivier

*by* EDWARD SOREL

AFTER appearing in a series of stage flops, Laurence Olivier was broke. The few London productions still limping along in Depression 1930 had no role for the twenty-three-year-old actor, and in just over a month he was to wed the popular actress Jill Esmond. Suddenly, a light in the darkness: an invitation from that most celebrated man of the English theater, Noël Coward.

Coward was only seven years older than Olivier, but as a playwright, actor, producer, and director, he was a theater phenomenon. His plays, whether comedies or somber dramas, were invariably successful, and if any required a song—or even if they didn't—Coward would dash off a haunting favorite such as "I'll See You Again" or "Someday I'll Find You." But beyond his varied talents, it was his style and lightning wit that won him admirers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Olivier arrived at Coward's Belgravia townhouse that June morning and was ushered into the bedroom. The master, dressed in exquisite Japanese silk pajamas, was finishing breakfast in bed. He greeted the actor warmly as "Larry," which emboldened Olivier to use "Noël"s with abandon. Coward told Olivier how much he had been struck by his stage work, and then handed him the typed script of his latest—*Private Lives*. Coward wished Olivier to play Victor, a pompous bore who was to serve as foil for the witticisms of Amanda and Elyot (Gertrude Lawrence and himself). Coward, seeing the actor's disappointment, assured him that the play would be an enormous success, and a good showcase. Olivier acquiesced, but blurted out that he would have preferred playing Elyot.

As Coward predicted, *Private Lives* was a smash. What he hadn't foreseen was that he would fall in love with Olivier. Whatever the actor felt for the smitten playwright, he was determined to lead a conventional married life. Each night, when the curtain went down, he dutifully went home, where his wife, in a neat plot twist, was disinclined to bed with him.

This backstage triangle might have made an amusing comedy. It didn't play that way.



Illustration by Edward Sorel

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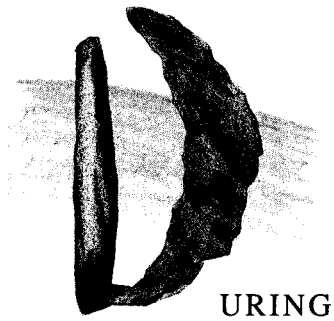
# MARIJUANA AND THE LAW

by ERIC SCHLOSSER

*The vigorous enforcement of marijuana laws has resulted in four million arrests since the early 1980s. Owing to mandatory-minimum sentences, many of those convicted are receiving stiff prison terms, even as violent criminals are released for lack of space. The second part of a two-part article*



DURING the 1980s criminal penalties for marijuana offenses were made much tougher, at both the state and federal levels. More resources were devoted to their enforcement. And punishments more severe than those administered during the "reefer madness" of the 1930s became routine. As a result there may be more people in prison today for violating marijuana laws than at any other time in the nation's history.

Mark Young is one of those prisoners. In May of 1991 Young was arrested at his Indianapolis home for brokering the sale of 700 pounds of marijuana grown on a farm in nearby Morgan County. He had never before been charged with drug trafficking. He had no history of violent crime. His two prior felony convictions—one for attempting to fill a false prescription, the other for possession of a few Quaaludes and amphetamines—were more than a decade old. For each of these convictions he had received a suspended sentence and a one-dollar fine. Young's role in the marijuana transaction had been that of a middleman. He never handled either the marijuana or the money. He had simply introduced two partners in a marijuana farm, Claude Atkinson and Ernest Montgomery, to a couple of men from Florida who were acting on behalf of a New York buyer. Under federal law Young was charged with "conspiracy to manufacture" marijuana and was held liable for the cultivation of all 12,500 marijuana plants grown on the Morgan County farm. The U.S. attorney now had the option of filing for an "enhancement," owing to Young's prior drug felonies; this would trigger a mandatory-minimum sentence upon conviction. After being denied bail, Mark Young learned that his marijuana offense could lead to a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment without the chance of parole. His case helps shed light not only on a quiet revolution in the realm of marijuana laws but also on the often perverse consequences of mandatory-minimum sentences.

## THE NEW RULES

THERE have been mandatory-minimum sentences in the United States since the days of the first Congress, most of them adopted to punish narrowly defined crimes. A number of the old mandatory minimums are still on the books, for offenses such as "robbery by pirates" (1790) and "practice of pharmacy and sale of poisons in China" (1915). The overwhelming majority of criminal laws passed by Congress specify only a maximum sentence. It has historically been the role of a federal judge to determine whether a convicted offender deserves that maximum, a lesser sentence, or no prison sentence at all. Until seven years ago a federal judge had great leeway in choosing sentences: Congress set only the upper limits, thereby protecting citizens from excessive punishment. Parole boards served as



Illustrations by Seymour Chwast

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another brake on unduly harsh sentences, deciding when prisoners merited early release.

The first broadly defined mandatory minimums were contained in the Boggs Act, which was passed at the height of the McCarthy era, amid the tensions of the Korean War and domestic fears of Communist subversion. There seemed to be an increase in narcotics use among the young, and lenient judges were thought to be partly to blame. Members of Congress vied to appear tough on drug offenders. Senator Everett Dirksen favored legislation that allowed the death penalty for selling narcotics to minors. Congressman Edwin Arthur Hall advocated giving drug dealers mandatory-minimum sentences of a hundred years. Congressman L. Gary Clemente introduced a bill recommending the death penalty for any violation of the Narcotic Drugs Import and Export Act. The commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, Harry J. Anslinger, seemed almost moderate in calling for a mandatory minimum of five years for second offenders, which he assured Congress "would just about dry up the [drug] traffic." Congress followed his advice and then lengthened the anti-drug mandatory sentences, in 1956. One vocal critic of the new sentencing regime was James V. Bennett, the director of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, who attributed the passage of such laws to "hysteria." Thereafter Bennett was followed by FBN agents, who submitted reports on his movements and speeches.

By the late 1960s a widespread consensus had emerged in both political parties that the anti-drug mandatory-minimum sentences were a failure. Members of Congress, federal judges, and even prosecutors found them too severe, unjust, and, worst of all, ineffective at preventing narcotics use. The spread of the 1960s drug culture had hardly been impeded by the existence of mandatory-minimum sentences. In 1970 Congress repealed almost all the mandatory penalties for drug offenders, an act celebrated by, among others, Congressman George Bush, who predicted that these "penal reforms" would "result in better justice and more appropriate sentences." A movement arose seeking a new means of determining federal sentences. Allowing too little judicial discretion had proved to be unfair, but too much could also lead to inequities: a bank robber in Florida might be given twenty years by a federal judge, whereas a bank robber in California received probation for exactly the same crime. Marvin Frankel, a federal district judge in New York, imagined a system in which a commission of legal experts would set guidelines on how to determine sentences for various crimes, taking into account details of the offender's criminal history and the nature of the offense.

After long and careful deliberation, the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 was passed by Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support, creating the United States Sentencing Commission. It seemed a triumph of rational jurisprudence over demagoguery, an experiment in social planning that evoked shades of the Progressive Era, when panels of appointed experts were hailed as the ideal form of government. Judge William W. Wilkins Jr., a former protégé of Senator Strom Thurmond and Ronald Reagan's first appointee to the federal bench, was made chairman of the new commission. In only eighteen months Wilkins and his fellow commissioners devised sentences of varying severity for about 2,000 different federal crimes. These sentencing guidelines took effect in 1987. Under the new rules each federal offense was assigned a numerical value; the judge added or subtracted points in a given case, according to various criteria; and punishment was determined by matching an offender's total points with a range of applicable sentences listed on a chart. A judge could depart from the guidelines at sentencing, but had to offer an explanation for doing so.

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The sentence could later be appealed by the defendant—or the prosecutor.

The same Congress that passed the Sentencing Reform Act also included in that very bill mandatory-minimum sentences for drug offenses committed near schools. Two years later the Anti–Drug Abuse Act of 1986 moved away from the deliberate calibrations of the sentencing guidelines by endorsing the blunt instrument of mandatory-minimum sentences for a wide variety of drug offenses. The University of Maryland basketball star Len Bias had just been killed by crack cocaine, and anti-drug sentiment had reached new heights; lawmakers decided once again to send a tough message. Mandatory-minimum sentences, based on the amount of drugs involved in an offense, were set at five years, ten years, and twenty years. Additional mandatory minimums were added later, including what is now known as a "three strikes, you're out" provision that specified life sentences for repeat drug offenders. During the congressional debates on these mandatory sentences there was little mention of the precedent of failure set by the Boggs Act, or of how the new laws would undermine the sentencing guidelines, or of what the wider effects might be on various aspects of the criminal-justice system, from the initial filing of charges to the ultimate rates of imprisonment. According to one survey, the most commonly cited justification for the harsh new punishments was a desire for retribution, a legal theory nicknamed "just desserts."

**THE DEBATES ON MANDATORY SENTENCES MADE LITTLE MENTION OF WHAT THE WIDER EFFECTS MIGHT BE ON THE CRIMINAL-JUSTICE SYSTEM.**

For most of the nation's first 200 years a convicted man or woman could ask a federal judge for mercy. On the basis of extenuating circumstances, a judge could reduce a prison sentence or waive it altogether. The new mandatory-minimum laws took that power away from the judge and handed it to the prosecutor. A U.S. attorney now has the sole authority to decide whether a mandatory minimum applies in a particular case—that is, whether to frame a charge under such a statute or not. The only way a defendant can be sure of avoiding a mandatory-minimum sentence is to plead guilty and give "substantial assistance" in the prosecution of someone else. The U.S. attorney, not the judge, decides whether the defendant's cooperation is sufficient to warrant a reduction in sentence. A defendant might cooperate and still not receive a shorter sentence, if the information supplied falls short of expectations. Long mandatory prison terms provide a strong incentive to talk. From the government's point of view, guilty pleas, accompanied by cooperation, avoid expensive trials and supply valuable evidence. From the defendant's point of view, the pressure to name others is enormous.

Some federal judges believe that the quality of much testimony in court has diminished; desperate people will say anything to save themselves. An appeal for compassion is now pointless; all that matters is the demand for cooperation. Under such a system the dilemmas often have an elemental quality. This past January in Kansas City, Tora S. Brown—a nineteen-year-old first offender with an eight-month-old daughter—cooperated with the government in a drug case involving PCP but refused to implicate her own mother. Brown was given a ten-year prison sentence without the chance of parole.

## "A SAD DAY FOR EVERYBODY"

ASSISTANT U.S. Attorney Donna Eide, in the Southern District of Indiana, offered Mark Young a reduced sentence in return for a guilty plea and his cooperation: forty years without the chance of parole. Kevin McShane, Young's attorney, thought the offer ridiculous; he wouldn't accept forty years as a plea bargain in a first-degree-murder case. That remained the government's only offer from May to September of 1991. Meanwhile, one by one, the other defendants in the conspiracy case "flipped," agreeing to cooperate.

Claude Atkinson had been facing a mandatory life sentence, the others sentences of ten years to life. By offering cooperation each had received a "cap" on his sentence, an upper limit, of anywhere from eight to thirty-five years. But each could also conceivably walk free, without any prison time. Their sentences would depend on their performances in court, among other things. Young and Ernest Montgomery and his wife, Cindy, were the only remaining defendants who would not plead guilty.

Under the U.S. sentencing guidelines, Mark Young's marijuana offense warranted a prison term of roughly twenty-two to twenty-seven years. The guidelines would apply in his case unless the U.S. attorney decided to file an enhancement, reflecting Young's criminal history and requiring the mandatory life sentence. Donna Eide made one last offer: eighteen years, pending cooperation. Young refused it. The government filed its enhancement on the Friday before the trial was to begin. The wheels had been set in motion, and Mark Young had a long weekend in which to make his choice: agree to cooperate or risk spending the rest of his life in prison.

Kevin McShane does not believe that the government real-


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ly wanted to give his client a life sentence; that sort of threat is now common in the give-and-take of the plea-bargaining process. He does not believe that the government really wanted any information from Mark Young. Claude Atkinson, who knew more than anyone else about the marijuana farm, was talking up a storm. The identities of the New York and Florida buyers would have been of interest to federal authorities in other districts, but it was not clear that Young even knew their real names. On the eve of the trial it seemed that the government simply wanted to avoid a trial. McShane strongly advised Young to accept the offer of eighteen years; with so many potentially hostile witnesses, his chances in court were uncertain—a roll of the dice. Young's family, which to this point had remained silent on the issue, also urged him to cooperate. His mother visited him in jail and begged. "At the end, when we saw how bad it was, I just really got on him," she recalls. "'Please, Mark, do it, do like the rest of them are, don't do this, don't end up, you know, with a life sentence, don't do it. Tell whatever you have to tell, like the rest of them are doing, to save yourself.' But no way would he do it. No way."

The day before Mark Young's trial began, Cindy Montgomery agreed to a plea bargain. The trial was notable for the details it revealed about the marijuana-growing operation, but the outcome never seemed in doubt. McShane thinks that Young's case was hurt by being tried alongside that of Ernest Montgomery, who had organized the operation. Jerry Montgomery testified against his brother and proved unable, owing to illiteracy, to read his own plea agreement for the jury. Cindy Montgomery testified against her husband. And Claude Atkinson spoke at length about everybody's criminal activities. The atmosphere at the trial was enlivened by jailhouse rumors that Mark Young not only had threatened the lives of Cindy Montgomery and Claude Atkinson and their families but also had slept with one of the jurors, who was going to thwart any guilty verdict. Young called no witnesses in his own defense. There was no physical evidence linking him to the crime, only testimony by Atkinson and Cindy Montgomery. The jury took just two and a quarter hours to render guilty verdicts on all counts. It had not been informed that a life sentence might apply.

Claude Atkinson was angry to receive a twenty-five-year sentence despite his cooperation. One of the prosecutors later described Atkinson as a "dreamer"; he may have expected to serve only a few years. For a sixty-two-year-old man, a twenty-five-year sentence was tantamount to life in prison. Ernest Montgomery, whose only previous conviction was for disorderly conduct, got thirty-four years without the chance of parole—also, in effect, a life sentence. His brother received eight years, his wife six, and the other defendants sentences ranging from three to ten years in prison. On February 8, 1992, Judge Sarah Evans Barker gave Mark Young a life sentence, as mandated. She also fined him $100, but did not order any of his assets forfeited; he had none, having paid his lawyer with a used car. "Mr. Young, it's a sad day for everybody in the courtroom," she said. "That concludes the matter."

A FEW years ago a federal judge in Utah, Thomas Green, refused to give two young drug offenders mandatory-minimum sentences of ten years each, ruling that their due-process rights had been violated by the decision to prosecute them under federal law. The same charges under state law probably would have brought prison terms of about two years. Congress, Judge Green observed, had severely curtailed the discretion of federal judges at sentencing, but had placed no similar restrictions on the behavior of law-enforcement officers and U.S. attorneys. As a result, the nation now faced "*de facto* sentencing by police and prosecutors." During the Bush Administration, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh did try to limit the freedom of federal prosecutors. He told them to seek the maximum penalty in every drug case, regardless of mitigating circumstances. The so-called Thornburgh Memorandum, still included in the handbooks issued to all U.S. attorneys, instructs them always to pursue conviction on the most serious "readily provable" charge. U.S. attorneys, however, are not obliged to follow that advice. In some parts of the country they have faithfully adhered to the Thornburgh Memorandum. In other parts individual exceptions have been allowed when a sentence seemed particularly cruel. In a few districts U.S. attorneys who oppose mandatory minimums have been collaborating with sympathetic judges, finding ways to help low-level drug offenders avoid long prison terms.

The Supreme Court has upheld federal mandatory minimums whenever they have been challenged on constitutional grounds, consolidating the increase in prosecutorial power. A U.S. attorney wields enormous influence in drug cases by deciding how to frame a charge, what quantity of the drug to include in the charge—and even whether to press federal charges at all. A different prosecutor might have charged Mark Young only with drug trafficking, likely bringing him a sentence of about seven years. Young's conviction for "conspiracy to manufacture" all 12,500 plants shows how broadly that crime is now being interpreted. The owners of garden-supply stores have been held legally responsible for marijuana grown by their customers—an application of conspiracy theory similar to that which once imprisoned people for selling sugar to moonshiners. Often the most important factor in determining a sentence is the amount of marijuana involved. Mandatory minimums ignore the defendant's role in the crime: a "mule" driving a truckload of marijuana can be subject to the same penalty as the person financing the shipment. In fact, defendants with the smallest role in conspiracies often serve the longest sentences, because they have so little information to trade. According to Judge Wilkins, of the U.S. Sentencing Commission, prosecutors do not pursue mandatory minimums in about two thirds of the applicable cases. Their reasoning is not made public. Unlike sentences administered by judges, those derived through plea bargains are settled behind closed doors.

Drug offenses differ from most crimes in being subject to three jurisdictions: local, state, and federal. A U.S. attorney,


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simply by deciding to enter a particular case, may greatly skew the range of potential punishments. A person may even be tried twice for the same drug crime: found innocent by a state jury, marijuana growers can be—and have been—subsequently convicted in federal court. There are no established criteria for when a U.S. attorney will enter a marijuana case. The federal government could prosecute any and every marijuana offender in America if it so desired, but in a typical year it charges less than two percent of those arrested. In some districts there is a policy that the U.S. attorney will enter cases involving more than a hundred plants or a hundred pounds. In others a federal prosecutor may simply take a special interest in a case. Two years ago Edward Czuprynski, a liberal activist who had long irritated public officials in Bay City, Michigan, was convicted in federal court of possession of 1.6 grams of marijuana: the amount found in a large joint. Under Michigan law he most likely would have received a $100 fine. But in federal court Czuprynski was sentenced to fourteen months in prison. His license to practice law was suspended. His successful law firm closed down. "They busted me completely," he says, "and that's what they wanted to do." After spending almost eight months in prison, Czuprynski was released by order of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, a decision that the U.S. attorney is now seeking to overturn. Considering his legal fees of $40,000, his lost income of ten times that amount, and the untold thousands of dollars the federal government has already spent on his case, Czuprynski says, "That may be the most expensive joint in the nation's history."

Four years ago Julie Stewart founded Families Against Mandatory Minimums, a grassroots organization with the motto "Let the Punishment Fit the Crime." She had not given much thought to America's drug laws until her older brother was convicted for having grown 375 marijuana seedlings. His sentence was five years. FAMM now has more than 20,000 members, most of them politically active for the first time in their lives. After Mark Young was arrested, his older sister, Andrea Strong, lost three housecleaning jobs in suburban Indianapolis—a sign of the great stigma that marijuana still carries in many parts of the country. Strong is now FAMM's Midwest coordinator, a self-taught expert on federal criminal law and a tireless campaigner for the repeal of mandatory minimums. FAMM lobbies Congress for sentencing reform and compiles case histories of inmates imprisoned under mandatory-minimum laws. Among them are Michael T. Irish, a first offender sentenced to twelve years in federal prison for helping to unload hashish from a boat; Charles Dunlap, a first offender sentenced to eight years in federal prison for renting a truck used by a friend to import marijuana; and Zodenta McCarter, a sixty-six-year-old woman, a first offender, poor and illiterate, suffering from diabetes, described as "naive, trusting, and childlike in comprehension," sentenced to eight years in federal prison for conspiring to sell ditchweed (a strain of wild marijuana that is rarely psychoactive). Since being incarcerated McCarter has had a heart attack, been infected with tuberculosis, and endured three operations.

## VISITING HOURS

LEAVENWORTH Penitentiary is the oldest prison in the federal system. It may also be the most dangerous. One hundred years ago there were no federal prisons. The roughly 2,500 convicts with federal sentences longer than a year served their time in state facilities scattered across the country. In 1896 Congress appropriated funds for construction of the first federal penitentiary, to be located on

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more than 1,500 acres in rural Kansas, a few miles from the Army base at Fort Leavenworth. The new prison was built by the convicts who would soon occupy it. In the eighty-eight years since it opened, only one prisoner has ever escaped from Leavenworth and eluded recapture. The red-brick walls, with a gun tower at each corner, are thirty-five feet high and extend an equal distance beneath the ground. The main building is massive, ominous, and redolent of power. It was designed to resemble the U.S. Capitol, converting a symbol of freedom into one of punishment and obedience. On a bleak winter morning, when the grayness of the sky and that of the neighboring fields seem to merge, Leavenworth looks exactly as an inmate described it more than six decades ago: like a "giant mausoleum adrift in a great sea of nothingness."

To reach the visiting room, you must state your name and purpose to a corrections officer in a small gun tower and then climb stairs to the front entrance. After passing through two electric doors reinforced with steel bars you are photographed; stamped with invisible ink; asked to sign a pledge that you are not bearing firearms, explosives, or narcotics; led through a metal detector; and then escorted through another large door with steel bars. The visiting room looks like a Knights of Columbus meeting hall, with blond-wood paneling, a row of vending machines, and comfortable chairs separated by small tables. There is no glass between inmates and their guests. Visits are supervised by corrections officers who sit on a platform at one end of the room; surveillance cameras are hidden in the ceiling. As I waited to meet Mark Young, a small boy ran up and down the length of the room playing with his father, a bearded inmate in khaki work clothes.

Jonathan Turley, a professor at George Washington University Law School, regards Leavenworth as a perfect microcosm of the federal prison system today: antiquated, often overcrowded, and extremely dangerous both for inmates and for corrections officers. Leavenworth's rated capacity is about 1,100 prisoners, but at times in the past year it has housed more than 1,600. Overcrowding vastly increases the risk of violence; prison riots become virtually inevitable. The federal system as a whole is operating at about 40 percent above capacity. Some facilities now house two to three times the number of people they were designed to hold, even as the federal prison population increases at a rate of about 10,000 inmates a year.

Tough federal drug laws, strictly enforced, have fueled this unprecedented growth in the federal prison system. The Boggs Act of the 1950s did not have the same effect, because drug offenses were less common and less vigorously prosecuted. As late as 1967 the Federal Bureau of Narcotics had only 300 agents. Its successor, the Drug Enforcement Administration, now has 3,400. During the 1980s annual federal spending to incarcerate drug offenders rose more than 1,300 percent, from $88 million to $1.3 billion. Anti-drug mandatory-minimum sentences and the guideline sentences formulated to mesh neatly with them have transformed the inmate population. In 1970, 16.3 percent of all federal prisoners were drug offenders; today the proportion of federal prisoners who are drug offenders has reached 62 percent. Within three years it should reach 72 percent. Many are first offenders, without so much as a previous arrest, who have been imprisoned for low-level drug violations. Of the 4,244 people convicted last year of violating federal marijuana laws, 56 percent had no criminal record deemed relevant at sentencing. State correctional facilities are also being overwhelmed by drug offenders. The prison systems in forty states are now operating under court order to reduce overcrowding. Violent criminals are sometimes being released early to provide cell space for nonviolent drug offenders whose mandatory sentences do not permit parole. The number of drug offenders imprisoned in America today—about 200,000—is the same as the number of people imprisoned for *all* crimes in 1970. Since the latest war on drugs began, in 1982, the nation's prison population has more than doubled. The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. No society in history has ever imprisoned so many of its own citizens for purposes of crime control.

**IN AMERICA TODAY THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IMPRISONED FOR DRUG OFFENSES IS THE SAME AS THE NUMBER IMPRISONED FOR ALL CRIMES TWENTY YEARS AGO.**

Mark Young is big—about six foot five, with the build one would expect of an old biker. He has long hair tied in a ponytail. He seems like a hippie version of the country-and-western star Hank Williams Jr., with a gravelly drawl and a deadpan sense of humor. Before being sent to Leavenworth, Young married his longtime girlfriend, Patricia Rowland, in a Native American ceremony at the local jail. Patricia visits him as often as she can, but it is a nine- or ten-hour drive from Indianapolis to Leavenworth, Kansas. She brings him photographs of changes in their neighborhood: new houses, new stores opening at the mall. They discuss how furniture should be rearranged at their rented home; she later moves things around accordingly, and sends him pictures. She does not want him to forget that a familiar world still exists outside the brutal one he now inhabits.


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# DEATH HAPPENS

Our culture does its best to distract us from one brutal fact: We die. Perhaps you tune God out, but He's sitting up there in a corner, just waiting. Sooner or later we'll have to settle accounts. No consuming pleasure, earthly utopia, therapy, or opiate will spare us.

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Young had never been in prison before being sentenced to Leavenworth. A marijuana offense usually leads to incarceration at a minimum-security prison or prison camp. But Young's life sentence labels him as a high risk for attempted escape, requiring that he serve his sentence at a maximum-security penitentiary. Young now finds himself living among some of the most violent repeat offenders in the federal system: murderers, rapists, armed robbers, international terrorists. His two-man cell is eight feet by ten feet, with a solid-metal sliding door and no view of the outdoors, just a window facing the catwalk. A few months after his arrival Young sat in a prison auditorium, packed with inmates, watching *Silence of the Lambs*. A riot suddenly erupted in the darkness. Prisoners divided by race and tore furniture apart to make weapons. Corrections officers were taken hostage. Amid the chaos Young grabbed a piece of a chair and huddled against the theater wall, terrified. When officers finally quelled the riot, hours later, Young was teargassed, handcuffed, and dragged along the floor through a pool of blood. Because of Young's size, other inmates have so far left him alone. "But anything can happen here to anyone, at any time," he told me, snapping his fingers. "Just like that." Inmates with life sentences and no chance of parole have nothing to lose. Last year a good friend of Young's, Clyde Harrison, was stabbed to death in the dining room, before hundreds of other people, over a $50 debt. The killer politely handed the knife to a corrections officer, handle first. Young had never witnessed anything like it. His friend died instantly, and then "people were stepping over him to get to the salad bar."

Young's trial was such a strange experience that he finds it difficult to describe. One would have to be very stoned, he thinks, to appreciate how absurd it felt. He hardly knew Ernest Montgomery and had met Claude Atkinson only twice, spending a total of less than an hour with him. He had never visited the farm where the marijuana was grown, and to this day does not know its location. Most of the people who testified in court were people whom Young had never laid eyes on before. It makes no sense to him that the law should give him a life sentence for conspiring to cultivate marijuana. Young is quite candid about a lot of socially unacceptable things he has done, and he admits to finding a buyer for the Indiana group, but he ridicules Atkinson's efforts during the trial to depict him as a major broker, a Paine Webber of pot. The truth, according to Young, is much less dramatic. He was in Florida, fishing with a buddy and sharing a joint. His friend praised the marijuana, which Montgomery had given to Young as a free sample. A few days later the friend called Young and asked if there was any more of "that good stuff." Young thought there was. His friend then called a friend, who called another friend: a buyer in New York. Young claims that he actually received only a fraction of the $70,000 fee alleged in court. He did not really know either the buyer or the seller. Once the two got together, they did the natural thing—eliminated the middleman. "They cheated me!" Young said, laughing hard.

Although he has always loved to smoke marijuana, Young never thought much about it until coming to prison. Now he is an authority on the subject, a fan of the authors Jack Herer and Chris Conrad, who believe that growing hemp can help protect the environment. The use of its fibers for paper, Young thinks, could save millions of trees, and its distillation into alcohol-based fuels could end the world's energy shortage. Young is busy in prison designing a Harley Davidson that will run entirely on marijuana—"the Hempster." Much to his family's distress, Young was recently sent to "the Hole," Leavenworth's disciplinary building, for smoking marijuana in prison. The marijuana at Leavenworth is quite good, though expensive, he says. Most illegal drugs are easily obtained in Leavenworth, including hashish, a rarity elsewhere in the Midwest.

I asked Young the question that had been on my mind for weeks: Why didn't he cooperate with the prosecutors, when refusing to talk seemed to guarantee a life sentence? "It crossed through my mind a lot, trying to decide," he said. "But there's two ways I look at it. I feel kind of proud to have principles. And I'm glad I never lost that. But on the other hand, I can't really brag too much, because I didn't have anybody to give them. Who was I going to give them?" I suggested that they just wanted a name, some token of cooperation. The only name Young could provide was that of his fishing buddy; and in the end, he could not do it. "This guy has nothing," he said. "This guy couldn't buy half an ounce of marijuana, okay?" Young understands why the other defendants behaved as they did: "When you're talking the kind of time that they were passing out, you expect anybody to do what they can to fend for themselves." As for him, "No, I wouldn't do it any other way."

The worst thing about Leavenworth, for Young, is the noise, "the constant roar of hundreds of people talking." His cell offers no escape from it, from voices echoing off the steel and concrete, day and night. Should Young ever be released, the first thing he plans to do is go fishing—"I'm sure now that I'm locked up, the bass have come out." He feels great bitterness toward his prosecutors. "Someone who'd do what they're doing is capable of doing anything. . . . They've only proved I'm capable of smoking a joint, or of introducing a guy to another guy who needs some pounds. That's the most they've proved me capable of. What they're doing, they're destroying these families and passing out life sentences, taking people's lives, putting children on the street—I mean horrendous acts." He laughed. "I don't know of anyone that would do anything that malicious for a salary." He has no complaints about the corrections officers—men with families, working toward a pension, who daily walk unarmed amid scores of violent inmates. "I wouldn't take their job for nothing in the world," he said. "Sometimes I wonder if they realize how bad a situation they're in—you know, really." Despite it all, Young expressed a touching faith in the



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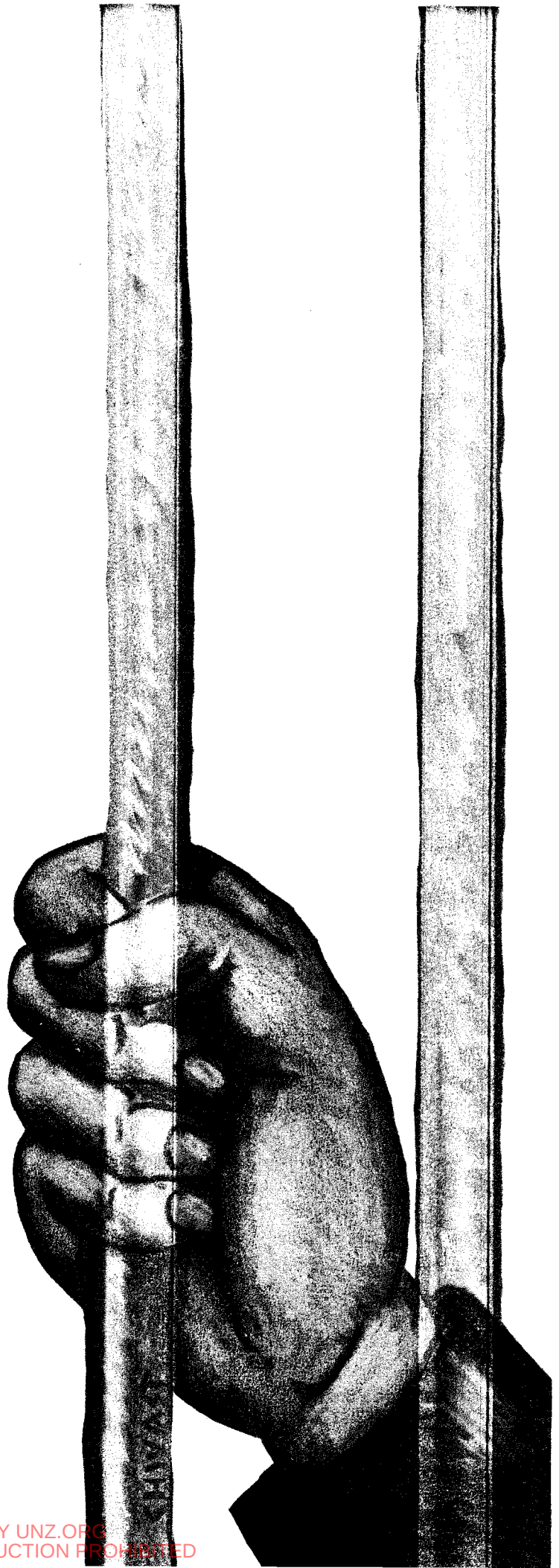
Constitution: "We're just going through a bad period . . . but I believe the Constitution can whip that."

When our time was up, a prison official gave Young a friendly tap on the shoulder and said, "Come on, buddy." Moments later a heavy door closed, and Mark Young was gone.

## DISSENSION IN THE SYSTEM

TOM Dawson has a folksy, small-town manner and a cluttered, unpretentious office, both of which disguise the fact that he is a very successful criminal attorney who has been admitted to the bar in every federal circuit. Dawson grew up in the town of Leavenworth, and is arguing Young's appeal. The issue before the court concerns how much marijuana Young could reasonably have foreseen would be produced by the conspiracy. Dawson and Assistant U.S. Attorney Donna Eide have been sparring over plants and pounds and the proper equation for turning one into the other; at times even the judges on the court of appeals get confused. The dispute might seem worthy of an Abbott and Costello routine if its outcome were not going to determine a man's fate. The gray-haired Dawson is a lifelong Republican who earns a living representing drug offenders, among others. But he has become profoundly disillusioned with the war on drugs. "It is corrupting everything it touches," he told me. At sentencing the degree of a defendant's guilt often seems less important than his willingness to hand over assets and name others. "I've had kingpins walk free," Dawson admitted. In a case handled by another lawyer, a major cocaine dealer with a fleet of Learjets testified against "everybody he ever met," Dawson said, and served less than four years in prison, despite being caught with 20,000 kilos of cocaine. "It's just the guy who doesn't cooperate who then gets everybody else's time. It's just the way it works. And they finally will run into some poor guy who says, just like Mark, 'I'm not going to do it. I've got principles.' Well, then, fine. You take all their time. And that's really about the way it works." Guilty pleas are what keep a legal system that is overwhelmed with drug cases functioning. In certain situations, Dawson believes, an innocent person is better off pleading guilty: "If you don't plead and you bet wrong, the sentences are just too high to serve."

Anti-drug mandatory-minimum sentences have created dissension in the federal legal system, prompting many judges to seek early retirement. Judge William Schwarzer, the head of the Federal Judicial Center, believes that the nation risks losing some of its best judges. In his view, a lack of respect for the profession, a sentencing process that often reduces judges to the status of adding machines, a staggering backlog of drug cases, and a widespread sentiment that judges are not to be trusted in choosing sentences may all combine to persuade highly qualified people to avoid the bench. Judges were meant to be impartial arbiters; too often now they are merely bystanders, as U.S. attorneys administer





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punishments chosen by Congress. Perhaps a hundred senior federal judges are currently refusing to hear low-level drug cases prosecuted under mandatory-minimum laws. One of them, Jack B. Weinstein, of New York's Eastern District, announced his decision with regret, aware that he might be passing the "dirty work" to his colleagues. "I need a rest from the oppressive sense of futility that these drug cases leave," he wrote in his announcement. "I simply cannot sentence another impoverished person whose destruction has no discernible effect on the drug trade." Weinstein believes that imprisonment can serve as a deterrent; in court I watched him rebuke corrupt taxi inspectors and insist that their plea bargains include prison terms. It is a question of proportion. In refusing to apply a ten-year mandatory minimum to a poor woman caught smuggling heroin, Weinstein quoted the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. "Every particle of real punishment that is produced, more than what is necessary," Bentham wrote, "is just so much misery run to waste."

Deborah Daniels was the U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Indiana from 1988 to 1993. She not only supervised Mark Young's prosecution but also helped set the Justice Department's sentencing policy during the Bush Administration. "My position as a prosecutor," she says, "was not to make the laws." Congress had passed legislation to remove judicial discretion through mandatory minimums and guidelines. The Justice Department decided that it would be wrong for prosecutors "to take over that role as judges." The laws were to be fully enforced as written. Daniels acknowledges that in some districts assistant U.S. attorneys would "work a case backward," deciding what punishment a defendant ought to receive and then finding a way to charge for it. "I don't agree with that. That's cheating. And we didn't cheat in the Southern District of Indiana. We played it straight. And that's how Mark Young got his sentence." She denies that the threat of long sentences was used mainly to induce plea bargains: "We didn't do things like that." The policy of her office was to seek conviction on the most serious readily provable charge—in every case, without exception. "The minute you start saying, Well, gee, that's kind of severe for this guy and what he did," she argues, "then you're deciding what the case is worth." Daniels believes that Young's sentence is what Congress mandated for that offense. Many people think it is wrong to give a life sentence when "only marijuana" is involved. Daniels disagrees. The United States cannot discourage other countries from exporting cocaine if it is unwilling to fight an illegal drug produced domestically. "Yes, prisons are expensive," she admits, "but if we are going to crack down on a serious problem . . . we are going to have to bear the brunt of that." She does not think the pressure to cooperate has diminished the quality of testimony in court. And what most people don't realize about U.S. attorneys, she says, is that they spend a good deal of their time getting innocent people out of trouble, by declining to file charges. In Mark Young's case, all things considered, the system worked exactly as intended.

Last year Attorney General Janet Reno amended the Thornburgh Memorandum, allowing U.S. attorneys to take into account the circumstances in a particular case—a tacit acknowledgment of prosecutorial power. Seeking the maximum sentence is still the policy of the Justice Department, but exceptions can be made. Judith Stewart, the new U.S. attorney in Indiana's Southern District, has vowed to seek "consistency without mathematical regimentation." The Clinton Administration, however, does not plan any changes in how the war on drugs is being waged against marijuana. Lee P. Brown, the head of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, recently summarized the Administration's view this way: "Marijuana, as you know, is a controlled substance. Our position is that it should remain a controlled substance. We feel that way because it is a potentially dangerous psychoactive drug, with strong links to medical problems and negative, or at least high-risk, behavior among its users." Enforcement policies adopted by the two previous Administrations will continue. The crime bills recently passed by both houses of Congress include weak "safety-valve" provisions that will allow judges to waive mandatory-minimum sentences for some low-level first-time drug offenders, who in return must offer full cooperation. The crime bills also specify the death penalty for any marijuana offender caught with 60,000 plants or more.

One of the great ironies of American drug policy is that anti-drug laws over the past century have tended to become most punitive long after the use of a drug has peaked. David Musto, a professor at Yale Medical School and the pre-eminent historian of American narcotics policy, explains that when drug use is at its height, so is tolerance; but as drugs recede from middle-class homes, their users are marginalized, scapegoated, and more readily punished. The price that society pays for harsh sanctions becomes invisible to most people. Musto thinks that our nation's drug laws reflect cultural changes after the fact; though extreme punishments may help to limit a drug epidemic, the principal causes of its rise and fall lie elsewhere. This theory is supported by recent history. Marijuana use among the young peaked in 1979; strict federal laws were passed seven years later, when use had already fallen by 43 percent; and the explanation most young people gave for quitting marijuana was a concern about the perceived health risks, not fear of imprisonment. A drug culture is once again emerging on college campuses, despite the existence of draconian mandatory minimums. Twelve years after the current war on drugs was declared, some rough numbers may hint at its cost: $30 billion spent so far at the state, federal, and local levels to fight marijuana; two billion dollars' worth of assets seized in marijuana cases; four million Americans arrested for marijuana offenses; a quarter of a million people convicted of marijuana felonies and sent to prison for at least a year. Statistics can only suggest a portion of the truth. As I learned from the families of inmates, the human costs are not so easily measured.


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CLOUD

MOON

CLOUD

ROOF

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BEDROOM

HALLWAY

BEDROOM

STAIRS

STAIRS

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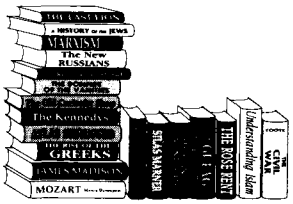

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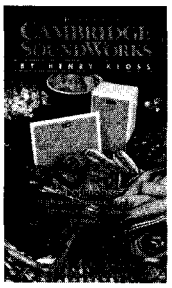

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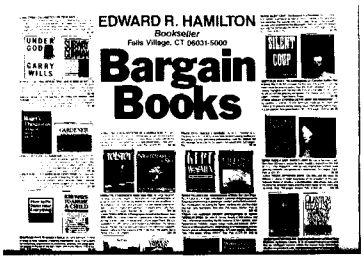


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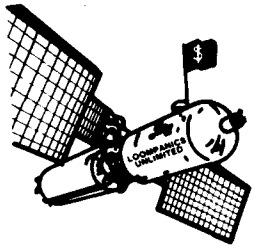


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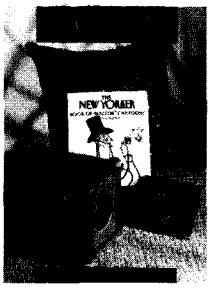


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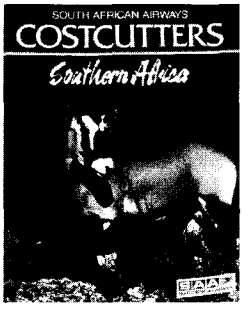


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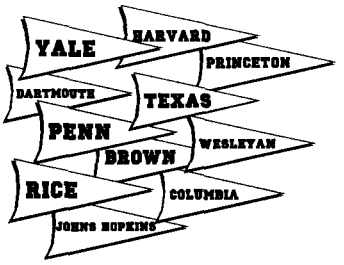


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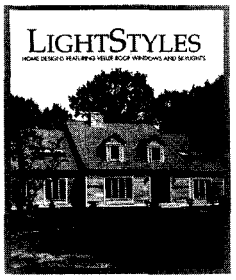


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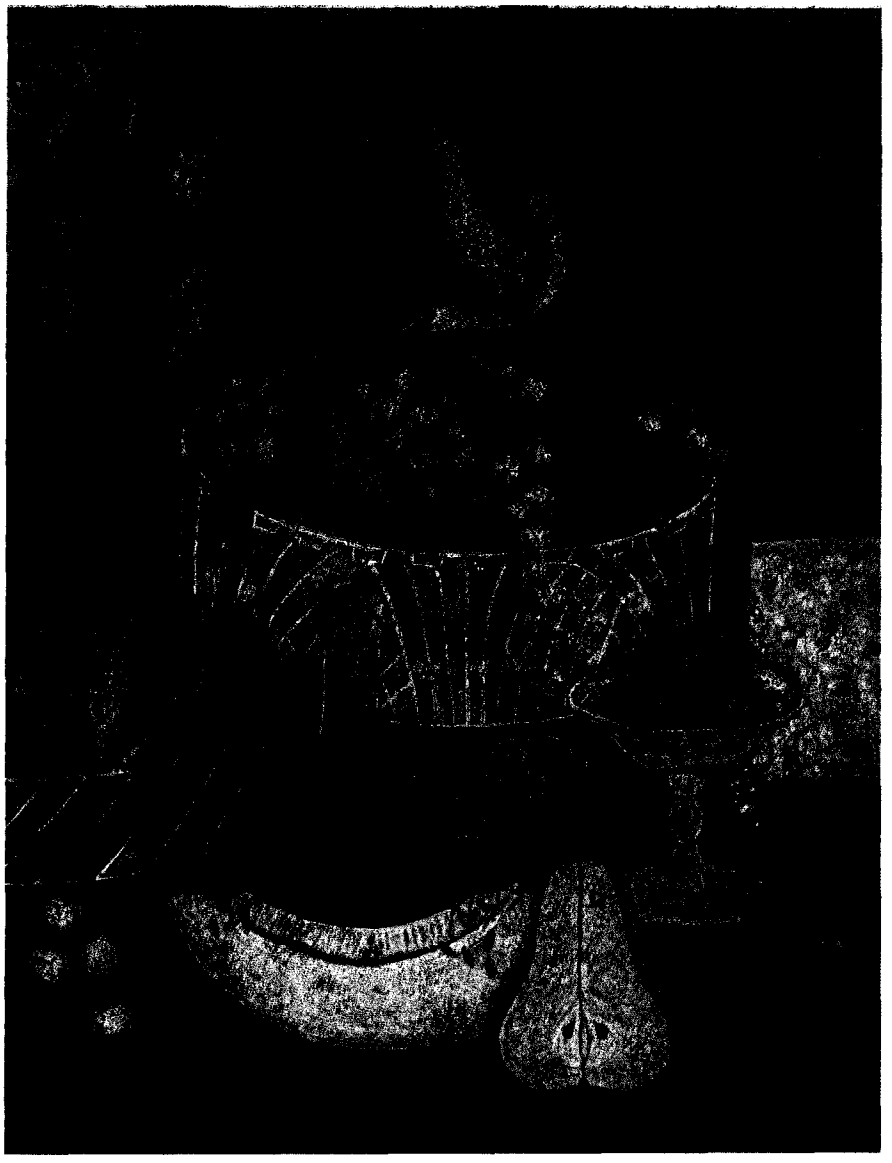

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*Sampling true balsamic vinegar without paying a king's ransom*

**by Corby Kummer**

As the supermarket version of balsamic vinegar was mounting its conquest of American salads, I ignored its advances. I wouldn't lower myself to buy a $4 bottle of industrial vinegar, having paid a small fortune ($40–$100 apiece) in Italy for several tiny bottles of homemade balsamic vinegar—the kind that until recently was never even sold but only handed down through generations or given as a sign of special esteem. True balsamic vinegar is viscous, with a mahogany sheen that makes it seem more a glaze than a common vinegar. The flavor is mellow, deep, rounded, and of such concentrated sweetness that the acid serves only to accentuate the herbal notes conferred by the various aromatic woods in which the vinegar has aged for at least twelve years and often for decades.

Supermarket balsamic vinegar is just red-wine vinegar cut with sugar and water. In wine vinegar most or all of the grape sugar has been fermented to alcohol by yeast, and then the alcohol has been fermented to acetic acid by bacteria. (Anyone who has opened a bottle of leftover wine knows that this second fermentation can take place unbidden.) The result is something very sour, which offers its own pleasures.

True balsamic vinegar begins not with wine but with unfermented grape juice, cooked down to concentrate its sugar. During the long aging the two kinds of fermentation, alcoholic and acetic, take place, and continual evaporation thickens the liquid. Every year the barrels are refreshed with both new vinegar and cooked-down juice, so that they won't be lined with very hard caramel. The resulting flavors are complex, and the vinegar is naturally far sweeter than wine vinegar.

I stayed smug, and my valuable little bottles stayed on high shelves. I watched the elaborate ceremony that waiters perform at Amarcord, a crowded new Manhattan restaurant featuring the food of Emilia-Romagna, where balsamic vinegar originated—they use an eyedropper to dispense balsamic vinegar onto thin slices of succulent boiled meats and capon taken from a steaming cart of *bollito misto*—and remembered the similarly stingy tableside ceremonies at restaurants in Emilia-Romagna itself. However often I cooked deeply flavored meat sauces, which benefit greatly from even a quarter teaspoon of balsamic vinegar, or ate strawberries, melon, and other summer fruits, whose sweetness is tempered by it, I rarely allowed myself a drop from one year to the next.

Then I discovered what the Italians call a *via di mezzo*. The balsamic vinegar that represents this "middle way" is certainly not the magnificent elixir that only long aging can produce. But it isn't cheap sharp vinegar, either, with a complete absence of depth. "Condiment" balsamic

Illustration by Cynthia von Buhler



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vinegar is a far less expensive version of the real thing, made with sound ingredients and aged a shorter time, to save money—but aged in wood, and blessed with the flavors only wood can confer. Once I made this discovery, balsamic vinegar became for me something between a condiment and a beverage.

A BOTTLE of balsamic vinegar of any kind is a rarity in an Italian kitchen. Many Italians I know frankly dislike it—too sweet, too strange. A supermarket in a midsize American town is much more likely than an equivalent grocery store in Italy to stock balsamic vinegar, industrial though it may be. Even connoisseurs in Italy save balsamic vinegar for use as a precious after-dinner cordial or as a remedy against dyspepsia (it was originally used as a medicine). They are astonished to hear how freely Americans use it.

Some food writers think of balsamic vinegar as soy sauce without the salt, a comparison I don't find particularly apt. The primary tastes of soy sauce are salt, ferment, and then sweetness. The primary tastes of balsamic vinegar are the sweetness of fruit, the acidity of vinegar, and herbal notes if it has aged in wood. The American mania for balsamic vinegar can likely be traced more directly to the sweet-and-sour foods of our German heritage than to the current popularity of things Italian. Balsamic vinegar is a much classier way to get sugar into a salad than simply spooning some in, as Americans once did by using boiled dressings and now do by using bottled ones (Russian, French), which all contain plenty of sugar.

On a recent trip to Parma, the ham-and-cheese capital of Italy, I followed the old Roman Via Emilia, now a superhighway, thirty miles east to Modena, which claims an exalted lineage for its balsamic vinegar. I went there to see Claudio Biancardi, a retired, though young, professor of engineering who continues his family's tradition of making balsamic vinegar under the eaves of the unheated attic in his family house. When I visited, late in the spring, Biancardi was engaged in a continuing legal battle to reserve the words "balsamic" and "Modena" for vinegar made according to the old ways: beginning the process with cooked-down juice, known as must, from locally grown grapes, most of them of the white Treb-


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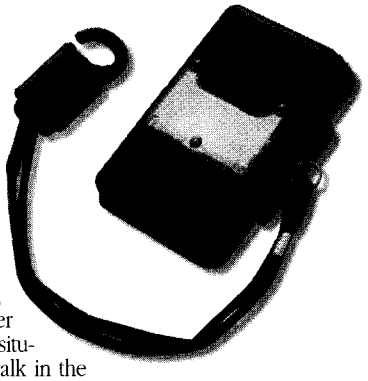

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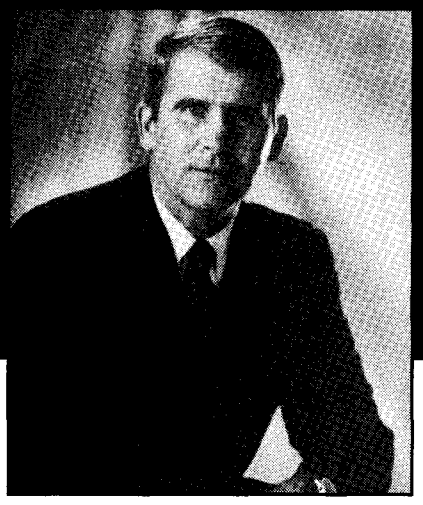

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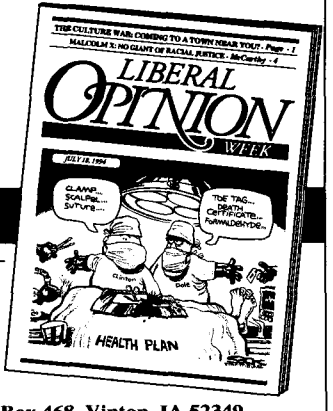


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biano variety, and then aging the vinegar for a minimum of twelve years in a series of barrels made of aromatic woods. (The word "balsamic" doesn't refer to wood; it was once a general word for many salutary potions.) Currently any industrial product can be called "balsamic vinegar of Modena." The only word that by law distinguishes the old-style vinegar from the new is "traditional"—not a word consumers know to look for. Biancardi is afraid that a new regulation now being considered will confuse matters yet further, and consumers will never know why one miniature bottle costs $60–$200 and another good-sized one costs $6.

Each step in the process of making traditional balsamic vinegar requires long experience. The cooking of the grape juice must begin before the juice naturally ferments to alcohol and must be slow, to prevent scorching while reaching the desired level of sugar. The must is left to ferment and acidify, using the bacteria naturally present in old barrels and in the dosings of new vinegar. After as much as three years of initial fermentation the vinegar is aged in *batterie*, series of increasingly small barrels of as many as seven different woods. The shuttling of the vinegar and must from barrel to barrel and the kinds of woods are up to the maker, and here skill and individual taste come into play. Climate does too, because cold nights and temperate days strengthen and mature the vinegar.

Most hereditary family *batterie* consist of just three barrels, usually of oak, chestnut, and mulberry; juniper is occasionally used, even if some find its gamy note distracting. Also, although families will brag of their century-old barrels, the problems of maintenance mean that few barrels are older than twenty or thirty years. Evaporation is encouraged by leaving plenty of headroom and by covering bungholes with nothing but cloth, of a weight somewhere between canvas and old cotton sheets.

Biancardi trotted me around the many lines of old barrels in his impressive *acetaia*, or "vinegar room," extracting samples with a glass tube that looked like a bulb baster and placing drops on the back of my hand. I tasted vanilla, wood, acid, slight hints of resinous herbs like rosemary and thyme, chocolate in the older vinegars, and a rounded sweetness that became more and more toffeelike as



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the samples got older. I was amazed at how much flavor could be released from a lick of just one drop—which is all I got.

Meanwhile, Biancardi spoke with increasing agitation of the scandalous practices of industrial producers: starting with the cheapest available wine vinegar; ignoring local grapes; adding beet sugar, irrigation-quality water, and caramel for coloring; omitting the essential quotient of long-aged vinegars; skipping wood aging altogether. After our tasting he led me to his study, where his fight with the Ministry of Agriculture occupies most of his time. Prodded by his wife, he presented me with a bottle of his own vinegar as I left. No wonder he was reluctant: traditional Modenese vinegar sells both here and in Italy for $100 and up—often way up. Naturally, I haven't dared to open the bottle.

AFTER leaving Biancardi, I drove a few miles back into enemy territory—the region around Reggio Emilia, which has its own designation for traditional balsamic vinegar. The rivalry between the two cities is long-standing. The Modena consortium of traditional balsamic-vinegar makers thinks that only it knows how to evaluate vinegar correctly and maintain quality. Reggio Emilia sees nothing wrong with marketing three kinds of balsamic vinegar—a practice that keeps the prices of the two younger vinegars far below that of traditional Modena vinegar.

I was going to the source of the vinegar that converted me to the profligate American use of balsamic vinegar—Cavalli, where Roberto and Giovanni Cavalli, sons of the founder (the business is parvenu by local standards), make both traditional and condiment-quality vinegar. In their enthusiasm and constant interruptions of each other the brothers reminded me of the two screenwriters in Robert Altman's *The Player* who keep popping up to try to sell their concepts. The Cavallis take shortcuts for the condiment vinegar: they use big casks rather than smaller barrels; they drop aromatic wood twigs right into the vinegar as it ages to infuse it with flavor; they stop the aging after three years rather than the far costlier twelve. Still, the vinegar starts with unadulterated cooked must from traditional grape varieties; it shuttles among casks in what Burton Anderson, in his chapter on balsamic vinegar in *Treasures of the Italian Table*, calls a "waltz"; and no coloring is necessary—the condiment is already a lush purple-brown.

I've sampled a dozen moderately priced balsamic vinegars, many in fancy bottles with labels attesting to their long aging in wood, some more expensive than Cavalli's. The only condiment vinegars to rival the rounded sweetness and welcome acidity of Cavalli's are the house brand of the New York gourmet shop Balducci's, which is made in a similar way but ends up a bit sweeter, in Modenese style; and a new Californian entry, a balsamic vinegar aged six years by the very talented Cristina Carrelli, who grows grapes just for vinegar at Vine Hill Farms, in Sonoma. Less impressive but acceptable are the condiment vinegar of Giusti, a long-established house in Modena, and Manicardi "8," in a neat, bulbous bottle. I found every other brand, including the widely distributed Fini, in its pretty faceted frosted-glass bottle, to be an unpleasant amalgam of shrill red-wine vinegar and one-dimensional sweetness. Better to use a really good wine vinegar and stir in some honey.

(For notes on how wine vinegar is made and how to make it yourself, see the spring, 1994, issue of Edward Behr's fine quarterly newsletter, *The Art of Eating*, which costs $25 a year and can be ordered from Box 242, Peacham, VT 05862. Even if Behr likes France better than Italy, I'm a devoted reader, and this is a particularly good issue.)

With an air of giving me quite a gift, the brothers Cavalli presented me with a bottle of their silver-label traditional vinegar; by coincidence I had already bought one in America, for $79, from the store Zingerman's, in Ann Arbor, and on a previous trip to Reggio Emilia I had also bought a bottle of red-label vinegar, the least expensive traditional version, which Zingerman's sells for $59. These economy versions of traditional vinegar don't seem interesting enough to merit the price. If I'm going to spend a lot of money for a tiny bottle from which to take a teaspoon every December, I'll buy traditional Modena vinegar (you can order a bottle from Richard Rogers, at 203-426-0216, or one from Corti Brothers, at 916-736-3800; be prepared for a bill of at least $100). If I'm going to use a tablespoon or two at a time, I'll happily pay $20 or so


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# Jerusalem

## Whose city—whose "holy city" is it?

It's twenty-seven years, since Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, that the city of Jerusalem has been reunited under Israeli rule. It was understood that Jerusalem was Israel's undivided capital. But now, in the context of the peace negotiations with the Palestinians—unwittingly buoyed by the accomodating attitude of the current Israeli government—the status of Jerusalem has once more become the object of discussion.

## What are the facts?

**A city of many nationalities.** Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if ever asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city in the Six-Day War. It now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Jews and Moslems) with its two mosques. It is the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Jews and Christians, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to those in the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina—cities that no "infidel" may visit.

**A tenuous Moslem claim.** It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. All Israeli governments, in their constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, have largely acceded to this tradition and have put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. They have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city" and the capital of their proposed state. And it would be an insult to all Moslems to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews".

"Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years."

**Jerusalem: never an Arab capital.** But the city of Jerusalem—in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus—has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national or even a provincial or sub-provincial capital of any country since biblical times. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the mosques on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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for a half liter of Cavalli condiment vinegar (it's widely available; you can order it from Zingerman's, at 313-663-3400) or order the similarly priced "Mamma" Balducci's (the telephone number is 800-225-3822) or Vine Hill Farms' (available from Katz & Company, in Napa Valley, which makes its own delicious fruit preserves: the number is 707-944-1393). If the only choice is cheap industrial vinegar, I'll take that of Monari Federzoni, the familiar supermarket brand with the strange picture on the label of a padlocked spider web over a bunch of grapes, which at least has enough sugar to mask the stinging sharpness of the base wine vinegar.

TRADITIONAL balsamic vinegar gives incomparable depth to a sauce, especially a long-simmered one that includes meat and tomatoes. But condiment vinegar gives you a chance to try all kinds of combinations. You might want to experiment right away with pouring it over vanilla ice cream, or sprinkling it over anything fried. A good place to look for more ideas is Lynne Rosetto Kasper's *The Splendid Table*, a book about the food of Emilia-Romagna. Kasper suggests using it in recipes for potato salad and grilled endive, putting it on grilled sweet peppers seasoned with fresh oregano and black pepper, and using it as a marinade for fatty fish such as bluefish, salmon, and tuna, and for poultry and meat, with garlic and cilantro. She reserves traditional vinegar for scallops, lobster, and fresh fruit—and, of course, to be sipped as an after-dinner cordial.

In my abandon after discovering Cavalli, I found that it goes well with orange juice. My standard salad dressing last winter was extra-virgin olive oil and equal parts balsamic vinegar and orange juice. In the summer, when lettuce has more flavor and herbs are plentiful, I revert to lemon juice as the sole acid for salads and anything raw, and brush grilled vegetables and fish with oil and balsamic vinegar and herbs. Like sweet wines, balsamic vinegar enhances foods that go well with onions, such as beef stews and liver, and is particularly good on baked whole onions. Now that I have a secure source of affordable good vinegar, when I make a very-long-cooked ragout sauce this winter, I might even break open one of my hoarded bottles.



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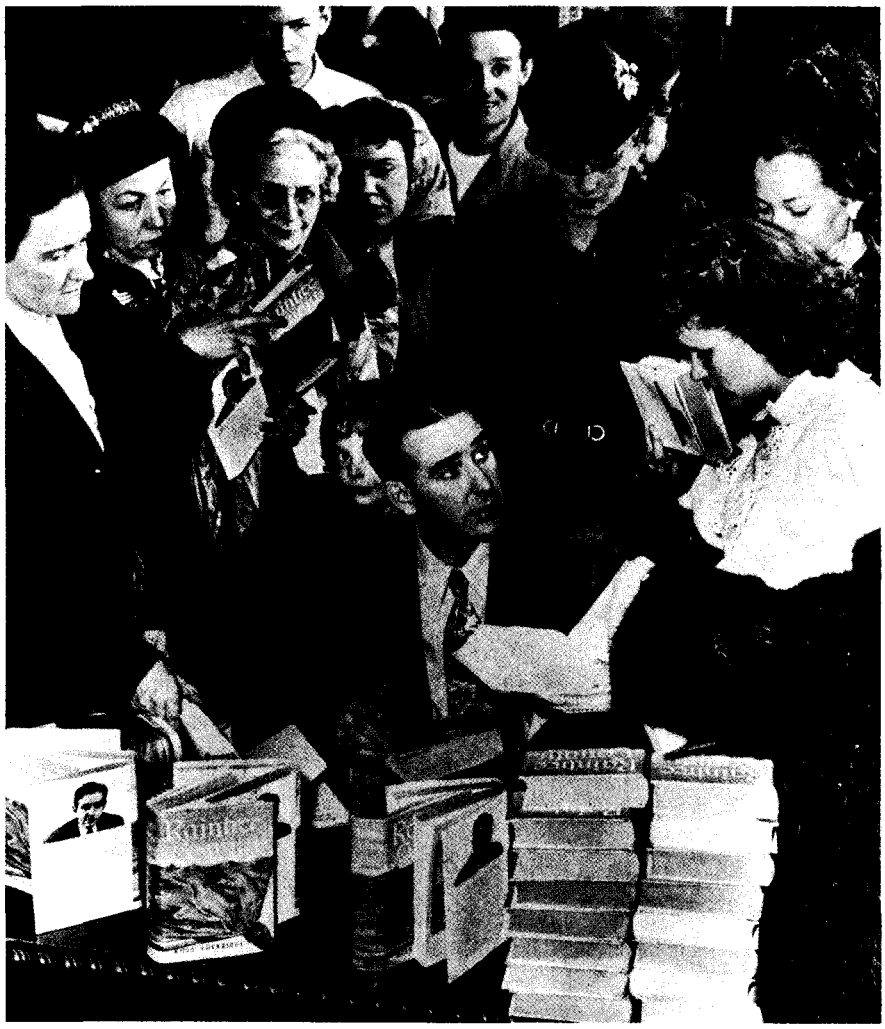
FEWER and fewer of us can imagine what it was like to be sentient in 1948, and so it behooves us to approach the thousand-piece puzzle of *Raintree County*, by Ross Lockridge Jr., with a certain humility. Such a novel would probably not be published today, let alone be so lavishly received. It is even hard to imagine that it could be written in a time like ours. Yet for a brief moment Lockridge was able to cast himself as an American Homer, whose portrait of an Indiana county sought to remake the American myth. Some critics, and American readers in large numbers, bought his audacious act.

Something was amiss, however, and probably always had been. Eight weeks after the publication of *Raintree County*, on March 6, 1948, the thirty-three-year-old Lockridge furnished a dramatic epilogue to the book. While his long-suffering wife sat inside their house in Bloomington, Indiana, awaiting his return from an evening of errands, and while their four children slept, Lockridge was a few feet away in their garage, asphyxiating himself in the back seat of his Kaiser. The "young hero and endlessly courageous dreamer" of *Raintree County*'s last words had turned out to be the vision of a bleaker sort of fellow.

It is impossible to read *Raintree County* today (some would leave the statement at that) in ignorance of this tragic piece of biographical intelligence. Now that *Raintree County* is being brought back from the dead in a new edition, we have a much richer context to consider, what with all the existential mysteries and traditional verities that surround genius, "success," and suicide. In this relentlessly optimistic novel we can seek clues to the darkness Lockridge seemed unable to face. Dead men do tell tales, but not necessarily the ones they intended.



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***The last known photograph of Ross Lockridge Jr., in early 1948***

Briefly in late 1947 and early 1948 Lockridge would have had good reason to believe that his endless dreaming had been providentially fulfilled. *Raintree County* was borne on a river of hype. A thousand-page first novel by a crinkly-eyed Indiana naif who (the legend already went) had brought his bulky manuscript to Houghton Mifflin in a battered suitcase, *Raintree County* was a corn-fed, swaggering, patriotic, highfalutin, and



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occasionally naughty yarn. "It attempts no less," declared its astonishingly heedless publisher, "than a complete embodiment of the American Myth."

Though Lockridge had settled for—leaped at—a $3,500 advance in mid-1946, *Raintree County* went on sale in the early winter of 1948 a much more valuable property than that. The book was aswarm with industry buzz, such as it was in those innocent days, and bore the Midas touches of the Book-of-the-Month Club and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The studio, in a novel-to-movie promo competition, paid the unknown writer a well-publicized $150,000 for motion-picture rights to this manifestly unfilmable story. He was widely quoted as saying, "Now I guess I can buy that washing machine for my wife."

VERNICE BAKER LOCKRIDGE

***Ross and Larry in 1945, on the boy's third birthday***

Lockridge's seven years' work, more important to him than lucre, was rewarded with book-reviewerly encomiums, too. Frank Brookhouser called *Raintree County*'s publication "an event in American letters." Charles Lee, in *The New York Times Book Review*, called it "an achievement of art and purpose, a cosmically brooding book full of significance and beauty." Howard Mumford Jones, in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, said, "it may be that *Raintree County* marks at last the end of a long slump in American fiction." Readers, or at least would-be readers, were responding. On the morning after Lockridge died, as his ebullient publisher had wired him, *Raintree County* became the No. 1 bestseller on the New York *Herald Tribune* fiction list.

"He seems to have gained the whole world and then to have wondered what it profited a man," surmised the Washington *Evening Star* a few days later. This seems right, as far as it goes. Lockridge's ego was both more swollen and more fragile than most. The testimony of Lockridge on Lockridge, which is voluminous, suggests that he experienced the rather familiar deflation and sense of loss that follows any climax—and experienced the unhappy revelation with an intensity to match his elaborate fantasies. Overnight celebrity, the decisive answer to his prayers, had come at a high price—his bitter surrender of hundreds of pages of *Raintree County*'s original immensity.

One so beaten and susceptible found the exposure of publication difficult to bear. A clean-living, seldom-drinking, nonsmoking family man, Lockridge was jolted by attacks from the clergy, directed chiefly at his soft-focus descriptions of carnal relations, most of them only imagined. A Jesuit professor at Fordham University called the novel "1066 pages of bombast, rank obscenity, materialistic philosophy, and blasphemous impudicity," and said, "The devil had a lot to do . . . with the writing of this book." Lockridge seemed to feel the cold stares of reproach on the street in Bloomington.

He also felt wounded, as authors will, by attacks on his masterwork—especially that in *The New Yorker*, which not only called *Raintree County* "the climax of all the swollen, pretentious human chronicles that also include a panorama of the Civil War, life in the corn-and-wheat belt, or whatnot" but also referred to its author throughout, fabled fact-checkers notwithstanding, as "Lockwood." The very detail is poignant to the point of heartbreak.

LOCKRIDGE had told his publisher, in language suitable for repetition by publicists, that he had aspired to write "the American *Republic*, in which the relation between the life of the Individual and the life of the State would be studied and interpreted in terms of ideas and by a process of dialectic resembling in some ways that of Plato's *Republic*."

Lockridge's son Larry, who can be frank as well as filial, says in his new biography that Lockridge was close to a "delusional state of mind" when he wrote his autobiographical notes for Houghton



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Mifflin. "Grandiosity is a flip side of depression," Larry Lockridge writes. In the months before he died, according to *Shade of the Raintree*, Lockridge suffered from what today we would more quickly treat as a form of clinical depression. In his last months Lockridge clung to his mother's Christian Science before finally seeking treatment and submitting to electroshock therapy—all of this in deepest secret, while the *Raintree County* publicity machine marched forward.

But even the former, supposedly stabler Lockridge had staggered Houghton Mifflin, which had some experience with the stubborn vanity of authors, with his nearly deranged self-regard. During their long struggle over a concluding 356-page "dream section" that the author considered essential to *Raintree County*, Lockridge wrote to his publisher that the decision was "of great importance to me, the book, and possibly the future of American letters." To another editor he wrote, "It is a book that Americans need to read. It will do them good—goddam them." When his publisher, in one of their many contract skirmishes, made a proposal Lockridge considered treacherous, he wrote an enraged letter that must have been widely appreciated in the corridors of Houghton Mifflin:

> This promise—coming from a man who is not aware that he has ever broken a promise so solemnly given to himself or another—is that Houghton Mifflin Company shall *never* have another big book by the author of *Raintree County*. Do not misread your man —do not misread your man.

Lockridge had disclosed his outlandish aspirations in the pages of *Raintree County*. "Perhaps he too was fated to rewrite the great book of God in a new land and in a new tongue," he wrote of his hero and secret sharer, John Wickliff Shawnessy, "budding bard of Raintree County, / Life's eternal young American." There is always peril in conflating fiction and biographical fact, but it is hard to do otherwise when confronted with a passage like this one:

> It seemed to him that he must be a greater poet even than Shakespeare because there was some essence of what he was that Elizabethan England couldn't possibly compose. He, John Wickliff Shawnessy, was perhaps the bearer of the sacred fire of poetic ge-


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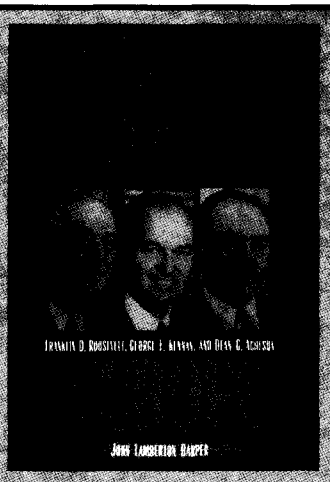

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nius that is given from mind to mind like a regenerating torch. It was he, child of the sunlight, the corndense earth, the simple beliefs of Raintree County, who would become the great American poet. Son of his greatheart-ed mother, of his energetic, sanguine father, he was perhaps a chosen seed, brought from far places.

Read to the last page or merely viewed from afar, *Raintree County* is a lot to get one's mind around. Like *Ulysses*, it is the tale of a single day—July 4, 1892, in a fictitious Indiana county. As the day creeps forward in brief installments, the narrative segues repeatedly to key episodes from as far back in time as 1844, both inside and outside the county.

In 1892 Shawnessy is in the early twilight of his life—with *his* epic masterwork, incidentally, unfinished. Surrounding this yearning, brooding carrier of the mythic hod are a pageantful of outsized characters. "The Perfessor," Jerusalem Webster Stiles (another J.W.S.), is Shawnessy's cynical tutor and the novel's redeeming if long-winded voice of asperity. Shawnessy's old friend and rival, Senator Garwood B. Jones, silkily captures the tarnish of the Gilded Age. Poor Shawnessy's days are marked by a succession of remarkable women, from Venus to vixen, who provide Shawnessy with a lifetime of fantasy, succor, estrangement, and despair. He has a merry metaphysical twin, lower-case "mr. shawnessy," "a faunlike hero poised on the verge of festive adventures," according to *Raintree County*, in counterpoint to the upper-case "straw man" Shawnessy, "dutiful citizen of the Republic calling for his mail."

Among its other claims to attention, *Raintree County* marked the emergence, Lockridge wrote of his work-in-progress, of "a new form, an art form mingling the characteristics of many previous genres." The narrative appropriates all manner of "text(ure)s," as the academics might type it: doggerel, oratory, song, tribute, journalism, dramatic dialogue, prophecy, pseudoscience, poster, and "epic fragment," a kind of found narrative. Lockridge, youthful in his predilections, is fond of marrying words, German-style: "forestfringe," "dawnsounds," "rivermarge," "streambegotten." The last (periodless) sentences of chapters hook up with the first sentences of ensuing chapters to make new (if awkward) straddling sentences. The book is equipped with two maps and three chronologies, the better to make sense of its sprawl. ("Sprawling" was the descriptive Lockridge most resented.)

Lockridge hated to be mentioned in conjunction with Thomas Wolfe, as he often was, and protested the comparison with such passion as to remind anyone listening of his painfully engorged self-esteem. He could also describe, with less indignation, how his writing differed from Joyce's: Lockridge *wanted* to be understood. Such was the goulash (his fans would say the literary firepower) of *Raintree County* that readers took the name Lockridge in the same vein as Wilder, Dreiser, Whitman, Joyce, Maupassant, Faulkner, Hawthorne, Benet, and Sinclair Lewis. The young first novelist did not seem abashed by the august company. In a letter to one of his editors he wrote, "The BOMC, which missed taking *Grapes of Wrath*, cannot in the long view afford to miss taking books like *Raintree County*."

THE novel was pitched, and is sometimes remembered, as a novel about the Civil War. It is, in part. In his peregrinations outside the county Shawnessy is wounded in Sherman's March to the Sea and happens to be in Washington when John Wilkes Booth does his foul deed at Ford's Theater. He also encounters the brutalities of racism and the mysteries of miscegenation when he follows a nightmarish wife to her ancestral Louisiana. The movie version may have strengthened the impression of what the book was about. When M-G-M finally wrestled *Raintree County* onto celluloid, in 1957, only a fraction—that fraction—of Lockridge's plot could be squeezed into its interminable three hours and five minutes.

But, as Lockridge would have been—and typically was—the first to say, *Raintree County* has broader shoulders than mere national cataclysm and bloodied social fabric. It sends its innocent, wandering hero on long journeys of battle, temptation, and self-discovery. It plants the mystical raintree of life in the edenic Great Swamp at the center of Raintree County. From its Independence Day vantage, *Raintree County* limns a whole nation throughout much of a century. ("The Union forever! O, beautiful, unanalyzable concept!" goes one piece of verbal bunting I'll always cherish.)



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# Why America Needs an Immigration Moratorium

From amidst the cacophony of discordant immigration proposals, one hears the emergence of some simple truths. First we now know that immigration is costing somebody, or some people, a lot of money. Whether it's hundreds of millions or billions (the studies never seem to agree), it's clear that immigration is not a self-financing proposition. State taxpayers in California, Florida, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia and Texas are demanding action.

Second, it's clear that immigration is now a political issue of some potency. Polls indicated that most Americans generally oppose immigration, if for no other reason than they think immigration is needless. Some is OK, they say, but only as long as there are no noticeable ill effects.

But all that changed in the face of Haitian boats, the World Trade Center bombing, Chinese boats, international immigrant-smuggling and crime syndicates, persistent illegal immigration from Mexico, and high profile tales of immigrant-related welfare rip-offs.

Now a public consensus has emerged: Let's hold off on more immigration. If immigration is costing money and creating other problems, why not just give the country a break from immigration for a while?

So far, the political leadership in this country has failed to grasp this whole analysis. Most Democrats and Republicans have suggested either beefing up the Border Patrol or cutting benefits for illegal immigrants. Within these two broad strategies is an array of often inconsistent ideas to "defuse immigrant bashing," as it's often called.

The administration's "border enhancement plan," for example, includes measures to accelerate naturalization ceremonies. This noble-sounding initiative to create more citizens will actually produce longer backlogs for waiting relatives (now at 4 million) and only increase future pressures for illegal immigration.

Eventually political leaders will have to face facts: Immigration is costing money. Rather than cut off welfare to immigrants, or rubber-stamp more applications, Congress and the president need to think about cutting the number of immigrants. That's really what the public wants. And it is probably only a matter of time before most politicians figure this out.

Unfortunately, the current laws take us in exactly the wrong direction, actually causing immigration levels to increase.

Based on current projections of temporary and permanent immigration, new labor market entrants are likely to exceed available jobs by more than 8 million in the next 10 years. This cannot be allowed to happen. We need a pause in immigration for a while.

Don't get me wrong. To reduce immigration, or provide a moratorium or time-out, is not to suggest that many immigrants do not become hard working, model citizens. It simply means that the country needs a break to absorb and handle its critical social and internal problems, and clean up its affairs to face the 21st century. It needs to strengthen its national institutions, civilization and culture to withstand the future stresses and strains likely to emerge later this decade.

We've had such immigration breaks in the past. In the early 19th century, and for a good part of the 20th, we've enjoyed sustained periods of very low immigration. And the truth is, sustained pauses have been good for the country and especially good for recent immigrants.

A few in Congress have figured this out. Despite feeling that it would be wonderful to take anyone who wants to come here, they are facing the sad truth that we need to limit immigration significantly to preserve the nation.

But, for the most part, the discordant noise of a bewildered and perplexed national leadership is still drowning out the tough truths needed for a brighter future. While the immigration issue is now firmly on the national radar screen, we may be years away from serious reform. How long can we wait?

*by Dan Stein, Executive Director*


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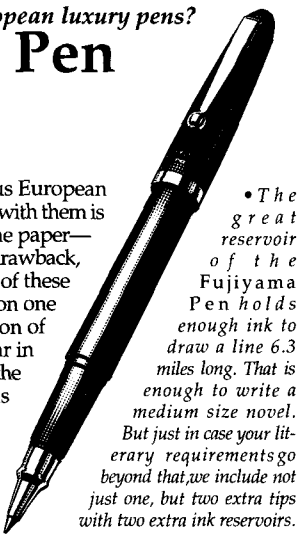

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### "Wrong Number"

*Each answer's correct location is given after its solution note. Across.* 1. ETHER (anag.); 25D 5. C(ROSSE)D (*Rose's* anag.); 26A 10. TRISTRAM (anag.); 18D 11. HEMS; 33A 12. B-LE-D; 30D 13. RE(TURNE)D (*tuner* anag.); 9D 14. S(LYE)ST; 15D 16. A-GI-TATE; 6D 17. NAMED (anag.); 36A 20. P(A)-ELLA; 14D 22. A-RO(UN)D; 23D 24. ELSIE (hidden); 8D 26. ERECTED (anag.); 35A 29. STYRO-N (*story* anag.); 20A 31. PAST(I)-CHE; 16D 32. TAIL (homophone); 7D 33. AT-O(VU)M; 1D 34. INTERNAL (anag.); 3D 35. DESSERT (rev.); 19D 36. OR-SON; 27D *Down.* 1. OR-A-L; 32A 2. OPERATE (anag.); 21D 3. C(HATE-AU)S; 31A 4. ALTER (anag.); 17A 5. SEALED (first letters); 22A 6. MANDATE (anag.); 2D 7. O-NTO (*not* anag.); 12A 8. A-MISS; 1A 9. L(ENIN)IST (*nine* rev.); 13A 14. PIE-CES; 5D 15. AS-S-OR-T; 29A 16. TANGOING (anag.); 10A 18. REN(O)VATE (anag. + *o*); 34A 19. P(L)ATTER; 5A 21. PA(R-AD)-E'S; 16A 23. PIC(O)TS; 14A 25. S-OLID; 4D 27. T-ELLS (*Welles* minus *we* anag.); 24A 28. MALE (anag.); 11A 30. DAME (anag.); 28D

"He deliberately uses many American archetypes," explains the younger Lockridge, a professor of literature at New York University, who has given *Raintree County* an exceedingly close reading: "the New Eden, the Frontier, the Republic, the Fall from Innocence, the Fear of Miscegenation, and character types such as the Innocent American Hero, the Dark Lady and the Light, the Capitalist, the Frontiersman, the Evangelical, the Feminist, the Statesman, the Perfessor." Lockridge quotes approvingly a critic's remark that *Raintree County* was, if not the Great American Novel, then the Great American Studies Novel.

Lockridge was far better when he eschewed unanalyzable concepts and concentrated on Raintree County. The land, the "box" of the county, was a potent piece of imagery for him—more nuanced, more felt, than many of his human portraits. "The formal map of Raintree County had been laid down like a mask on something formless, warm, recumbent, convolved with rivers, undulous with flowering hills, blurred with motion, green with life," Lockridge wrote, as his hero "mused upon this mingling of man's linear dream with the curved earth, couched in mystery like a sphinx." The original cover of *Raintree County*—designed, needless to say, by the author—echoes this conceit. In the green hills of a topographical rendering of the county the accustomed eye can discern the form of a recumbent naked woman: this was the crowning blasphemy to the indignant of 1948.

Lockridge's celebration of Indiana as America's Eden was not merely a creative device. It sprang from his deep attachment to the place where he had first dreamed his dreams, and to which he cleaved in times of doubt and distress—including at the end of his life, a time when he took some of the M-G-M money and exchanged it not for a mortgage on a place in Malibu and a new set of friends but for a house for his wife and children on a pleasant Bloomington street not far from where his parents lived.

More than bedrock family values were at work: Bloomington was a refuge, and a pond small enough for a deeply insecure frog. Though he had studied at Harvard and the Sorbonne after attending Indiana University in his home town, and though he taught English at Simmons College, in Boston, during the composi-



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tion of *Raintree County*, Lockridge was the resolutely midwestern character he played. He wanted to belong, and probably did belong, to some rectangular swatch of American soil just like the one on which he wanted to map the American soul.

Larry Lockridge disputes the characterization of his father as a naif. But his portrait only sharpens the impression of fatal innocence left by John Leggett in *Ross and Tom* (1974), a fine dual biography of Lockridge and Tom Heggen, another celebrated young writer (*Mister Roberts*) of the era, and a probable suicide himself. To see the overwrought Lockridge so willingly expose himself to ridicule and disappointment finally elicits in the reader something akin to protectiveness.

Did Lockridge, in his final act, upstage the book he had poured his heart into? Perhaps he did. This may dismay Lockridge sympathizers—and it is impossible not to be one of them in the face of someone so openly tortured. Larry Lockridge believes that *Raintree County* stands on its own as a neglected minor classic, but he acknowledges the rich possibilities for allegory in his father's life and struggle, his dreams and death. They, and not *Raintree County*, give us the story that survives with something still to say. The story isn't pretty, but it has other virtues conspicuously missing from *Raintree County*—among them a haunting conclusion.

Lockridge couldn't bring himself to give his life's work its final punctuation. *Raintree County*'s very last sentence, like the last sentences of the preceding 113 chapters, leaves off without a period—as if it, and Lockridge too, might go on forever.

# BRIEF REVIEWS

### The Normandy Diary of Marie-Louise Osmont

*translated by George L. Newman, with an introduction by John Keegan. Random House/The Discovery Channel Press, 134 pages, $17.00.*

From 1940 to 1944 Marie-Louise Osmont, the widow of a doctor and proprietor of a prosperous farming estate, kept a diary. The early entries are brief, practical, and so widely spaced in time that one is entitled to assume that cuts have been made. German soldiers appear, polite, well-disciplined, and infuriating, move in, create a mess, and move on, to be followed by others who repeat the process. By early 1943 Madame Osmont mentioned that she was hungry. By February of 1944 the presence of Germans has become an infestation. Many of them look sad, but they are more active than ever. Old friends are evicted from their chateau and ordered to take three generations' worth of possessions with them. The Osmont property is battered by vehicles, its gardens destroyed, walls dismantled, trees cut down. On June 4 Madame recorded, "Quiet, warm day; night, by contrast, filled with the noise of six drunks staggering and bawling. . . . They click heels nevertheless." It was to be the last quiet for a long time, for Périers, the diarist's village, lies three miles inland from Sword Beach, right in the path of the British advance. From June 7 Madame recorded nearby firing, ack-ack, the peculiar sound as missiles from the distant naval guns passed over, the tinkle of broken window glass, and the crunching away of outbuildings. There was no need to go hungry—more farm animals were killed than could be eaten—but sleep was close to impossible in the niche under the staircase, which was too small for two or three people plus the occasional terrified dog. Besides, the floor was hard, and the British, arriving in due course, were persistent mattress thieves.

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## PUZZLER CONTEST

Send your solved Puzzler "The Best Policy" (found on page 115) to: *The Atlantic Monthly*, September Puzzler Contest, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116. *The Atlantic* will randomly draw three names from among all correct entries received by September 12. The winners' names will be published in the November issue. In addition, each of the winners will receive a complimentary one-year subscription to *Tough Cryptics*, a bimonthly cryptics publication.

Rules: Only one entry per person allowed. No purchase necessary. No entries can be returned. All decisions are final. *The Atlantic* is not responsible for late or lost mail. Contest open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years or older, except employees of *The Atlantic* and their immediate families. Winners will be notified by mail. Contest void where prohibited and subject to all state, federal, and local laws and regulations.

**JULY'S WINNERS:**

NORA CORRIGAN
BOB FITZPATRICK
SARAH SHAW



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Madame Osmont actually devoted relatively little space to her discomforts. She was more concerned with the safety of friends in Caen, with the destruction of the countryside that she loved, and with pity for the troops "vibrant with that terrible excitement of combat" and on their way to be killed. She had been a nurse and ambulance driver in the First World War. She knew what she was seeing and described it with sympathy, clarity, and a stiff-lipped rejection of hysteria. One would like to know what happened to her, and to the Château Périers, after the war, but Mr. Keegan's appreciative introduction does not provide that information or explain why this remarkable diary has been neglected for half a century.

### Love & Sleep

*by John Crowley.*
*Bantam, 502 pages, $22.95.*

Mr. Crowley's novel begins with the proposition that "once, the world was not as it has since become." Let the reader be warned by this banality. The tale wanders plotlessly from the approximate present to Elizabethan England, encumbered by metaphysical and religious baggage, arcane references, and the philosophers' stone. There are ghosts, visions, and werewolves, but not even werewolves can locate any blood in the characters.

### My Son on the Galley

*by Jacob Wallenberg,*
*translated by Peter Graves.*
*Norvik Press/Dufour Editions,*
*192 pages, $24.00.*

Wallenberg (1746–1778), the son of a minor and none too affluent Swedish official, had by the age of twenty-three contrived to become ordained as a clergyman and to acquire the post of ship's chaplain on the Swedish East India Company's *Finland*, bound for Canton. Wallenberg's account of the voyage is a Swedish classic, which is one reason for translating it, but there is a better reason. Despite some gentle homilies and verses that have, one trusts, suffered in translation, the text is plain old-fashioned funny. The author was an unbridled chauvinist. No people were as good as Swedes, no country as fine as Sweden, no church equal to the Lutheran, and young Wallenberg made merry mock of everyone from homely girls in Norway to stuffy and inarticulate Dutchmen in

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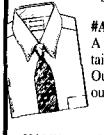

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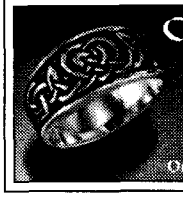

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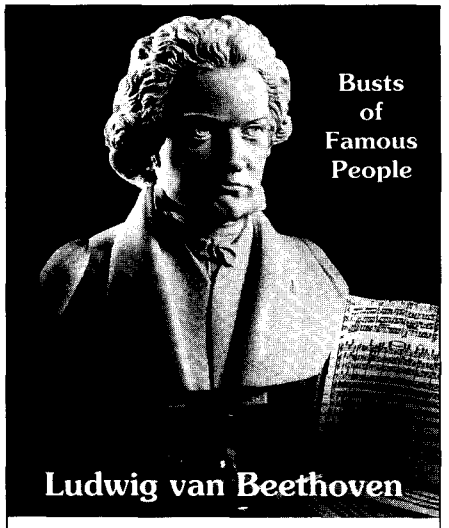


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South Africa. He did not neglect drinking parties aboard ship, or his own lack of success as a naturalist and horseman, or his unrewarded interest in women. (His remarks on women would get him lynched by modern feminists.) There is a certain guilty pleasure in chuckling over an author who never heard of political correctness.

### The Battle of Leyte Gulf

*by Thomas J. Cutler.*
*HarperCollins, 343 pages,*
*$25.00.*

The author is a retired naval officer who believes that the Battle of Leyte Gulf deserves remembrance as the greatest naval action in history, "the last significant sortie of the Imperial Japanese Navy," and a pivotal point, because although by October of 1944 the eventual defeat of Japan was widely seen as inevitable, "an American defeat would have been a disaster of great magnitude." His text supports that estimate. His presentation makes the maneuvers of that enormously complicated and wide-ranging battle comprehensible. He covers the capabilities of the various ships involved, both their weaknesses and their sometimes astounding ability to survive heavy damage. He describes the heroism of individual sailors and pilots, American and Japanese, and does not ignore such mistakes and miscalculations as those that destroyed the timing of the Japanese attack or sent the Americans into a duel of ship against ship with ammunition designed for battle between ship and shore. His material is exciting and his analysis of it is thoughtful and generous, because, as a veteran of Vietnam, he can state, "I sincerely believe that only those who have never been shot at would disparage the actions of men under fire." This is admirable history, but perhaps not for readers squeamish about horrible wounds bluntly described.

### A Throw of the Dice

*by Gordon Millan.*
*Farrar Straus Giroux,*
*389 pages, $30.00.*

Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898) achieved great respect and exercised wide influence among the avant-garde writers of his time without ever producing the great work that he regularly promised. How and why he inadvertently managed this somewhat ironic feat is well and plausibly ex-


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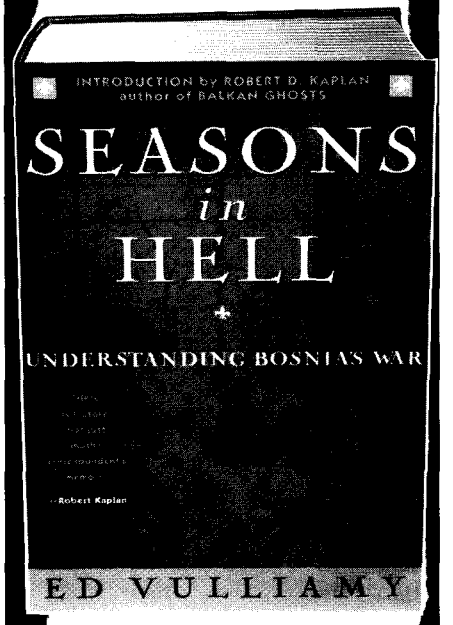


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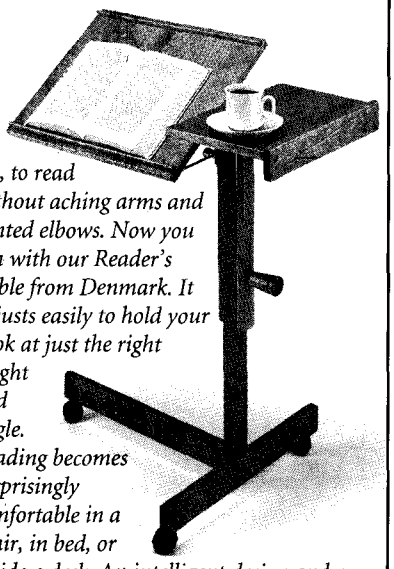
## Lay Down Your Arms



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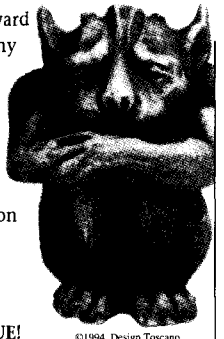

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plained by Mr. Millan, whose biography portrays a poet and critic of exceptional intelligence, receptivity, and charm.

### Frank W. Benson: American Impressionist

*by Faith Andrews Bedford.*
*Rizzoli, 240 pages, $50.00.*

In advising his daughter Eleanor about her work, the by then highly successful painter Benson (1862–1951) said, "Don't paint anything but the effect of light. *Don't paint things.*" Benson did not consider himself an Impressionist, but he did paint light—light on beaches, on waves, through woods, through mists, over snow. The inhabitants of his light-drenched milieus are pretty children, beautiful young women, sportsmen, guides, birds, and fish—all healthy, well dressed, and, with the exception of shot birds and speared fish, happy. Admirers of the later Ashcan School might accuse Benson of sentimental idealization, but they would be wrong. The paintings are not sentimental (those young ladies have a coiled-spring vitality, and the sportsmen work hard) and are only mildly idealized. Benson painted the best of the kind of life his well-heeled patrons proposed to lead. Ms. Bedford, the artist's great-granddaughter, writes well of his work as teacher, painter, etcher, and watercolorist, and sums up his career neatly. "Each time he moved in a new direction with his art, success followed him, creating a demand for his work" which "continued until the day he died and beyond." The book's numerous illustrations are likely to extend that demand—probably with no hope, for nobody who has a Benson is likely to part with it.

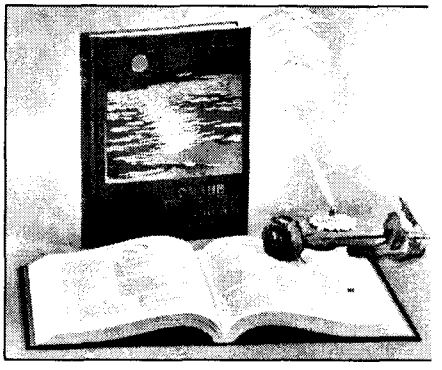
### The Flanders Panel

*by Arturo Pérez-Reverte,*
*translated by Margaret Jull Costa.*
*Harcourt Brace, 304 pages,*
*$21.95.*

A murder mystery worked out in terms of the chess game depicted in an antique painting is an intriguing conception, but its implementation proves to be somewhat verbose in style and its solution is prematurely predictable to any devotee of the genre. Probably Mr. Pérez-Reverte's ideal reader is a chess player with little previous experience of murder mysteries.

—*by Phoebe-Lou Adams*

# Poetry Contest $24,000 in Prize



***The National Library of Poetry to award 250 total prizes to amateur poets in coming months***

**Owings Mills, Maryland** – The National Library of Poetry has just announced that $24,000 in prizes will be awarded over the next 12 months in the North American Open Amateur Poetry Contest. The contest is open to everyone and entry is free.

"We're especially looking for poems from new or unpublished poets," indicated Howard Ely, spokesperson for The National Library of Poetry, "we have a ten year history of awarding large prizes to talented poets who have never before won any type of writing competition."

**How To Enter**

Anyone may enter the competition simply by sending in one original poem, any subject, any style to:

**The National Library of Poetry**
**11419 Cronridge Drive**
**PO Box 704-1491**
**Owings Mills, MD 21117**

The poem should be no more than 20 lines, and the poet's name and address must appear on the top of the page. "Each poem received will be acknowledged, usually within seven weeks," indicated Mr. Ely. Every poet who enters will receive an evaluation of their artistry by the judges.

**Possible Publication**

Many submitted poems will also be considered for inclusion in one of The National Library of Poetry's forthcoming hardbound anthologies. Previous anthologies published by the organization have included, *On the Threshold of a Dream*, *Days of Future's Past*, *Of Diamonds and Rust*, and *Moments More to Go*, among others.

"Our anthologies routinely sell out because they are truly enjoyable reading," added Ely, "and they are also a sought-after sourcebook for poetic talent by the publishers, recording companies, and the media."



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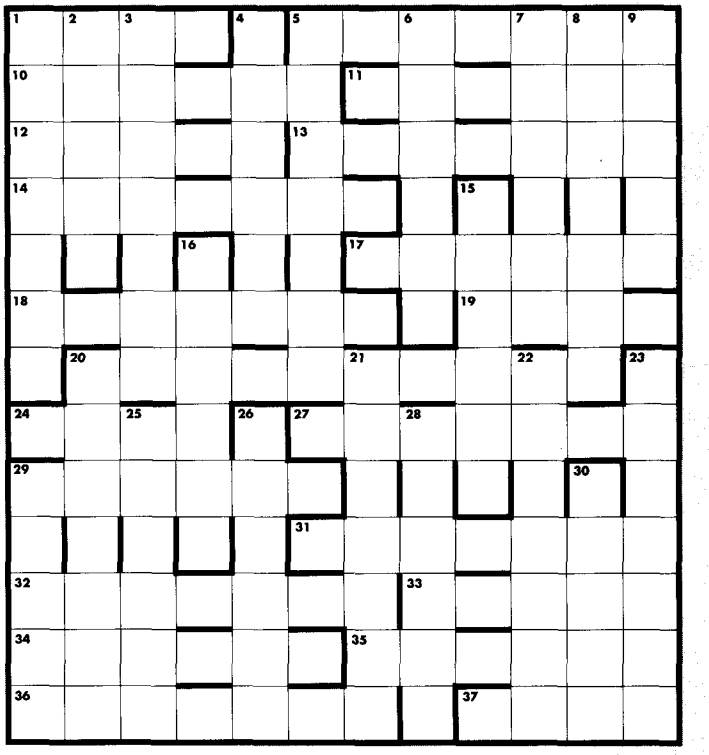
# THE PUZZLER

**by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon**

## The Best Policy

Honesty compels us to confess that 17 answer lengths (the numbers in parentheses) are incorrect. These numbers do tell how many squares are available in the diagram, but the 17 answers must be manipulated to fit into their squares. Answers, we can candidly assert, include eight proper nouns.



*See page 111 for Puzzler contest details. The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 110.*

### Across

1. Indonesian food stuff (4)
5. Piano composer of Britain pounds an Irish hero (7)
10. Town in Kerry rejected pictures of fish? (6)
11. One Latin force in seedy tavern causing dissension (6)
12. Passage right back of a kidney (5)
13. Grimly advanced, like the eyes of a lobster? (7)
14. Thankless person occupying bars? (7)
17. Room aboard vessel for rats (6)
18. Drag back organ for a storied traveler (7)
19. Some garden greenery keeping gold and white (4)
20. What each of nine spaces in this diagram might be called—honest (10)
24. Enthusiastic about soprano singers (4)
27. Voice is breaking by pantry (7)
29. Aquatic Olympian pens article in Acapulco, free (6)
31. Movie actor let canceled material remain, suppressing hostilities (7)
32. Shaking rattles, cause shock (7)
33. Pithy remark: "I have incentive" (5)
34. Pint I put in the possession of wine cellar's prisoner (6)
35. Refresher, one taken by gunner? (6)
36. Underworld visitor shot up horse (7)
37. Thousands collecting train sets (4)

### Down

1. Long and thin pen describes loop (7)
2. Convertible near a sports center (5)
3. Sweetheart comes in for fruit (7)
4. Vocally explain about the First Lady's city (6) (*two words*)
5. Annoying people eating the French grinders (7)
6. Tried to pass clear around valley (6)
7. Northerner and I smoke hash? (6)
8. *Long Island Review* blasted a conductor (7) (*two words*)
9. Lured leader of dragoons into Spanish city (5) (*two words*)
15. Out of public view, blab about Indian's first victory (6)
16. Start off misleading and baffling (6)
20. Match covered with wood of the finest quality (7) (*hyphenated*)
21. Those who cite wild torques (7)
22. Middle section of Corelli musical uplifted family member (7)
23. Seafood fork carried by newfangled stores (7)
25. Mountain is home to top cartoonist (6) (*two words*)
26. Happy clown in *Twelfth Night* wraps up one verse (6)
28. Article: "Ego's topics" (6)
29. Club is located in Washington and Oregon's capital (5)
30. Road by side of lake in moonshine (5)

**Note:** The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.



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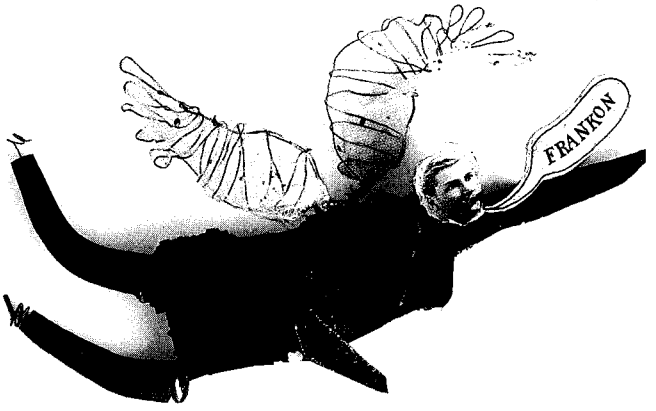
# WORD HISTORIES

by Craig M. Carver




## frank

Last April, after Hillary Clinton called a press conference to explain certain of her financial dealings, a supporter pleased with the outcome said, "She was everything that I knew she could be. She was relaxed. She was *frank* and open." *Frank* (free from guile or dissembling, candid) originates in the Germanic **franko*, meaning "javelin or spear." The Germanic tribes of the Rhine region were called *Frankon*- for reasons perhaps similar to those according to which the Saxons were named: in Old English *seax* means "knife." In the Frankish empire, which reached its peak in the ninth century, full freedom was the right only of the conquerors and those under their protection; thus their name came to mean "free men" and, more generally, "free." (Similarly, *slave* derives from the Latin *Sclāvus* or *Slav*, the name of the eastern Europeans who were routinely conquered and enslaved throughout much of the Dark Ages.) By the sixteenth century *frank* was used to refer to free or unreserved speech ("With *franke* and with uncurbed plainesse, Tell us Dolphins minde"—Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 1599). *Frank* has also given English numerous other words, including the verb *frank* (to send mail free of charge), the name *Franklin* (originally "a freeman or freeholder"), *franchise* (freedom from some restriction or servitude; suffrage), and *frankfurter* (hot dog), from Frankfort (Ford of the Franks), Germany, where the sausage was originally made.

## lick

"If this is something that can be *licked* by will power, by tenacity, then he can *lick* it," Henry Kissinger said when his former boss, President Richard Nixon, was being treated for a stroke last April. *Lick* (to overcome, get the better of) is ultimately from the Indo-European root **leigh-*, whose ancient meaning, "to pass the tongue over," survives unchanged in modern usage. To *lick* something with the tongue is to wipe it clean, and thus the basic sense is "to wipe away, destroy, beat, get the better of." The basic sense was reinforced by the metaphor in Numbers 22:4 ("Now shall this company *lick up* all that are round about us, as the ox *licketh up* the grass of the field"—King James Bible), which gave *lick up* the meaning "to destroy or annihilate." *To lick* a person of something was "to cheat or fleece" him, and *to lick of the whip* meant "to have a taste of punishment." The related expression *to lick (a person) into shape*, meaning "to make presentable," is from the quaint notion that bears shaped their young by *licking* them ("Beres ben brought forthe al fowle and transformyd and after that by *lyckynge* of the fader and the moder they ben brought in to theyr kyndely shap"—translation by William Caxton of *The Pylgremage of the Sowle*, 1483). All these senses prepared the way for the meanings "to beat or thrash" and, finally, by the nineteenth century, "to overcome or surpass" ("By Dane, Saxon, or Pict / We had never been *lick'd* / Had we stuck to the king of the island"—*The Spirit of the Public Journals*, 1800).

## flabbergast

When the Swiss pharmaceutical and chemical conglomerate Sandoz bought Gerber Products last May for $3.7 billion, it offered $53 a share—more than half again as much as the closing value of a few days earlier. "I think the $53 price is *flabbergastingly* high," one New York analyst told the Associated Press. Considered fashionable slang when it first appeared in print, in 1772, *flabbergast* (to astonish, confound) may be a Scots coinage resulting from a blend of *flabby* and *aghast*, *flabby* referring to the slack-jawed expression of someone who is utterly astounded, or *aghast*, at something. *Flabby* (hanging loose) originated in *flap*, an onomatopoeic word resembling the sound of a slap or sudden blow, which became *flappy* and then the variant *flabby*. *Aghast* (frightened, shocked) is ultimately from the Proto-Germanic **gastijan*, meaning "to terrify," which is also the origin of *ghost*. However, *flabbergast* developed another early Scots meaning: "to swagger or boast," with a related noun meaning "bombast, bluster" ("The 'Asiatic style of oratory' with . . . its meretricious *flabbergast*,—its diluvial verbiage"—*Fraser's Magazine*, 1831). The relation of this meaning to the common one is unknown. A third early Scots usage, which survived in American dialect into the early twentieth century, is *flabrigastit*, "worn out with exertion, exhausted" ("Sairly *flabrigastit* as I was wi' my hard day's kempin'"—W. D. Latto, *Tammas Bodkin*, 1864). This use could have led in time to the current meaning of *flabbergast*.

Illustrations by Polly Becker



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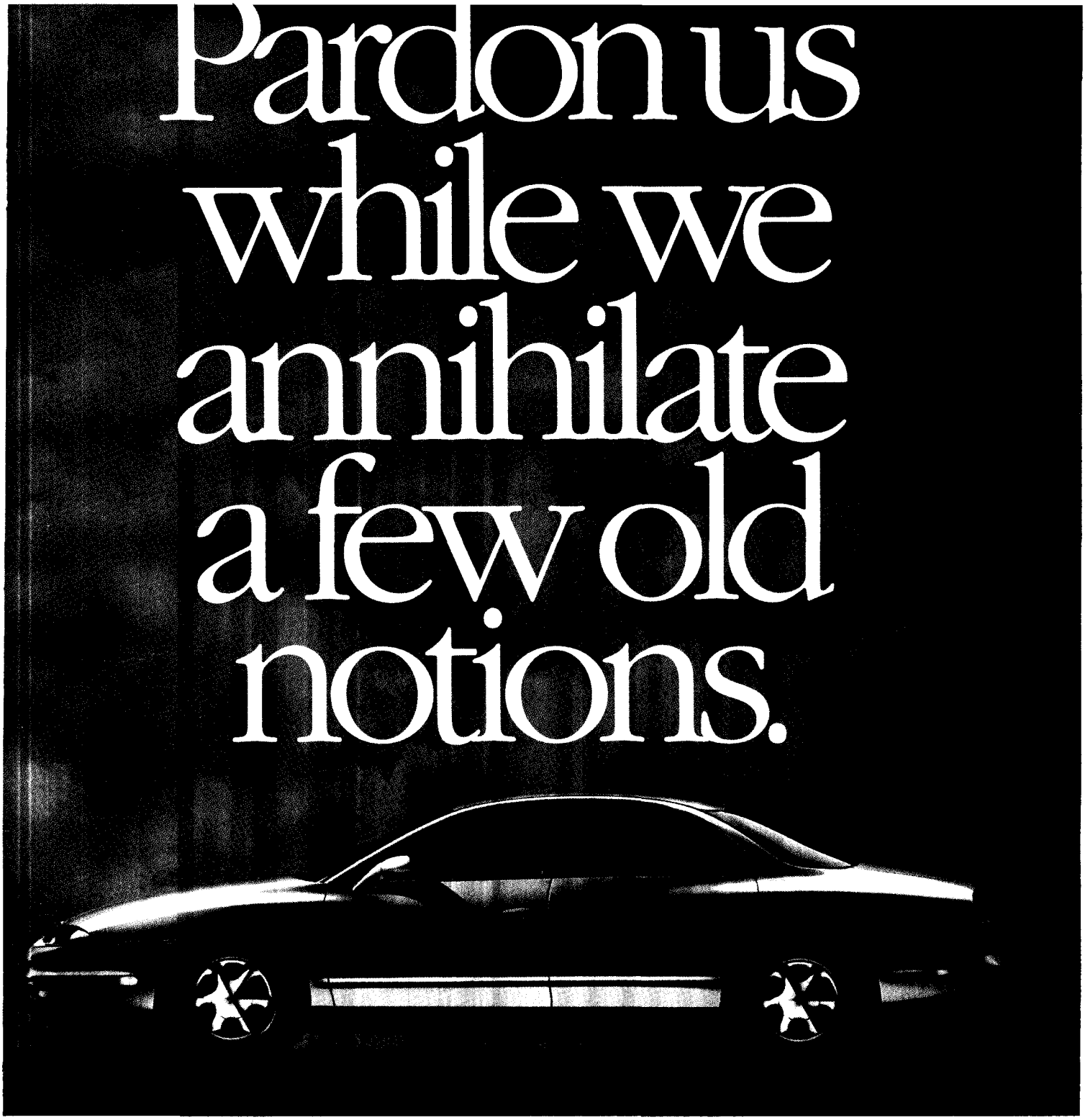


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